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Making English the Lynchpin for Globalisation of Education in Sri Lanka: Quality versus Equality

LindZay Baldsing

(B.Bus., M.Ed.)

This portfolio is presented in fulfilment of the requirements of the

degree of

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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ABSTRACT

The owl of Minerva takes flight at dusk and we are in the blazing noontide.
– Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831)

The author is a Sri Lankan expatriate who completed his primary and secondary education in Sri Lanka. He was guided and directed by his father, a Senior Master at the Royal College of Colombo and later Controller of Examinations. The author brings his experience in Sri Lanka into the preparation of this portfolio.

Material written in English for this topic was limited. Further, during the government of President Premadasa (1973–1986), all publications concerning education in Sri Lanka were suppressed. In addition, publications were scarce during the civil war (1983–2008).

This portfolio was written to emphasise the importance of English for Sri Lankans and to accept it as the lynchpin for globalisation of education in Sri Lanka: it will see them participate in global knowledge, progress and achieve prosperity as a result. The portfolio explains that as a British colony, only a chosen few in Sri Lanka were privileged to be educated in English – who as a consequence of which found employment in government and the private sector. The rest who were educated in the local languages either sought low-skilled employment or were unemployed, creating a widening socio-economic gap amongst Sri Lankans.

Towards the end of British rule in Sri Lanka, legislation was passed to provide free education for all Sri Lankans with a view to creating equal opportunities. This was followed by legislation replacing English with local languages as mediums of instruction in education. Shortly afterwards, English became a non-compulsory second language.

In a span of almost fifty years, competency in English was lost in Sri Lankan society. A great majority of Sri Lankans could neither write nor speak English, except for a few who were educated in fee-levying private schools and overseas.

Lack of competency in English made it impossible for Sri Lankans to participate in global knowledge. This in turn hindered their opportunity to participate in the progress of modern education, science and technology. In addition, those who lacked competency in English were prevented from obtaining better employment in banks and foreign commercial enterprises, and also from lucrative overseas customer call-centres.

Sri Lankans realised in hindsight the costly mistake of abandoning English as a result of nationalistic fervour and shortsighted political expediency. After a lapse of almost fifty years, the current reintroduction of English into the education system has become a daunting task, particularly because of the lack of competent English teachers and the scarcity of funds. This was further exacerbated by over thirty years of civil war in Sri Lanka.

There was a strong view held by politicians, educationists and Sri Lankans with strong nationalistic beliefs that English was a symbol of Anglo-American imperialism, which made them resist its reintroduction. Unfounded fears of imperialism and shortsighted political and nationalist policies have made Sri Lankans realise that English is not a symbol of Anglo-American imperialism but a multinational tool available to everyone who needs to participate in global knowledge. English is without doubt the lynchpin of globalisation in Sri Lanka.

DECLARATION

I certify that this portfolio does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- i. incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- ii. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
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I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Graeme Lock, for his invaluable advice, expertise, guidance, time and encouragement which have helped me complete this portfolio.

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CHAPTER 1: HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

Background

Geography

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) is an island in the Indian Ocean, separated from south-east India by the Palk Strait. It has an area of 65,610 square kilometres (25,332 square miles), and is almost linked to the Indian mainland by Adam's Bridge, a mostly submerged atoll barrier lying between the offshore island of Mannar to the north of the mainland and India (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 1).



Relief map of Sri Lanka

(Courtesy www.vidiani.com/maps/maps_of_asia/maps_of_sri_lanka/)

History

Records indicate that Sri Lanka appears to have been inhabited from as early as 125,000 BC. The earliest inhabitant was the Balangoda Man, who was the ancestor of the present-day Veddhas, a racial minority now inhabiting remote forests. The Great Dynasty of the Sinhalese, the 'Mahavamsa', was established in 543 BC by King Vijaya, who came from Bengal with his followers, the Sinhalese (or 'Lion Race'). They settled in the island's north (De Silva, 2008, pp. 1–70).

Tamil settlements began in the tenth century AD and gave rise to the Tamil kingdom of Jaffna located in the north of the island. There was a long struggle between Sinhalese and Tamil kings for control of this region. As a consequence, by the end of the thirteenth century, the Sinhalese were forced to migrate to the south. In the years that followed, malaria set in when continuing warfare destroyed irrigation and drainage systems. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Sinhalese population was split into two separate kingdoms, the hill-country kingdom of Kandy and the low-country kingdom of Kotte (Ministry of Education & Cultural Affairs [MOECA], 1969, p. 4).

The Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka in 1505 as traders. At that time, the ruling king faced rivalry from his sons for the Kotte Kingdom, and he sought protection from the new arrivals. The Portuguese realised the weakness of the monarch and were quick to seize the opportunity and gain power in the kingdom. The Portuguese, who had superior military and naval power, made themselves indispensable to the Kotte kings – so much so in fact that by 1597, Don Juan Dharmapala, last of the Kotte kings, who was assured peace and continuity of his descendants, bequeathed his throne to the King of Portugal. In the years that followed, the Portuguese soon subdued the northern kingdom of Jaffna, thereby acquiring most of the coastal belt of the country, leaving the central region and the hill-country to the kingdom of Kandy (MOECA, 1969, p. 6).

The Dutch arrived in Sri Lanka in the mid-1630s. By this time, the Portuguese had complete control of the kingdom of Kotte, and were also making attempts to capture the kingdom of Kandy. As a consequence, the King of Kandy invited the Dutch to dispossess the Portuguese, offered them special privileges in trade, and promised to meet their military costs in recompense (MOECA, 1969, p. 8).

The Dutch were eager to establish themselves in the country, and successfully expelled the Portuguese as agreed, but the King did not honour his promise. This resulted in several conflicts between the Kandyan and the Dutch, ultimately resulting in much of the island, with the exception of the kingdom of Kandy, becoming a Dutch possession by 1656. The Dutch then seized Kandy's coastal areas and the seaports, cutting the Kandyans off from the outside world. The Dutch ruled the entire coastal area of Sri Lanka for 138 years with the support of the Dutch East India Company (*Veereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie* (VOC)). They exercised rigid control over the colony and introduced the system of Roman Dutch Law, which is administered in the courts of Sri Lanka to the present day (MOECA, 1969, p. 9).

British interests in Sri Lanka developed in the late eighteenth century when the British army invaded Sri Lanka and forced the Dutch to accept its protection. Subsequently, by 1802 the Dutch colony became a British possession. At this time, the kingdom of Kandy was independent of British rule. The British led several military excursions into the Kandyan kingdom and it was finally captured. They then abolished its monarchy, and the whole island became a British colony by 1815 (MOECA, 1969, p. 11).

The constitutional development of Ceylon (as the country was then called) began relatively early in comparison to other British colonies. The Executive and Legislative Councils were set up in 1833. Full self-government was achieved in 1946 under a new constitution with bicameral legislature. Ceylon became fully independent and joined the Commonwealth of Nations in 1972. A new constitution was introduced in that year with a unicameral parliament, and the island became a Republic within the Commonwealth. It was known thereafter as Sri Lanka (MOECA, 1969, pp. 11–12).

Population

In 2004, the population of the small island State of Sri Lanka was approximately 20,064,778. Today, the largest ethnic group comprises the Sinhalese (seventy-four per cent), followed by Sri Lankan Tamils (twelve per cent), Indian Tamils (five per cent) and Moors (or Muslims, seven per cent). Other minorities include Malays and Burghers (persons of Dutch or partly-Dutch descent) and a small number of Veddhas, descendants of the earliest inhabitants. Sinhalese settlers arrived in the fifth and sixth centuries BC. Sri Lankan Tamils settled mainly from the tenth century AD onwards. Indian Tamils arrived later, brought in by the British in the nineteenth century as labour for the plantations. Some Indian Tamils were repatriated from 1964, and since 1988, all remaining Tamils have attained Sri Lankan citizenship. The Muslims are mostly descendants of Arab traders, and the Burghers are descendants of European settlers who came mainly from Portugal and Holland. The Malays are descendants of traders or retainers of European settlers in Sri Lanka (MOECA, 1969, p. 13).

Religion

The main religion of the population of Sri Lanka is Buddhism (sixty-nine per cent). Other religions practised in Sri Lanka are Hinduism (15.5 per cent), Islam (7.5 per cent) and Christianity (seven per cent). Arahath Mahinda, the son of the Indian Emperor Asoka, introduced Buddhism into Sri Lanka in about 243 BC. Sinhalese rulers embraced Buddhism and gave it royal patronage by supporting the monks and building temples and monasteries. The Sri Lankan people followed their ruler's example and accepted Buddhism, which has since flourished as the main religion of the country (MOECA, 1969, p. 14).

Hindu-Brahmanical and Hindu-Saivite religions were practised in Sri Lanka before the arrival of Buddhism, but as a result of the popularity of the new religion, older faiths became less practised. However, with the invasion of the northern kingdom of Sri Lanka by the Tamils from South India, Hinduism was reinforced and practised as the main religion of the region. Arab traders who visited Sri Lanka as far back as 1000 AD practised Islam. Their descendants who settled in Sri Lanka, known as Moors or Muslims, continue to practice Islam. Roman Catholics and Anglicans form the majority of Christian denominations in Sri Lanka, while Methodists, Dutch Reformed and other free churches comprise the balance (MOECA, p. 15).

The Portuguese arrived in 1505 AD, and were the first to introduce Christianity into Sri Lanka. While trade was the main reason for their journey to the east, they soon established a mandate to colonise Sri Lanka and also to convert the population to Roman Catholicism. It became their mission to acquire riches for their king in Portugal and to win souls for Christ – an exercise they continued for 160 years. Roman Catholics of Sri Lanka today are the descendants of those early converts (MOECA, p. 15).

When the Dutch arrived in Sri Lanka in 1658, they introduced the Dutch Reformed religion and were able to convert some Buddhists and Catholics to the faith. Despite persecution by the Dutch, it remained a difficult task converting Sri Lankan Catholics to Protestantism. The British, who arrived in Sri Lanka in 1796 and introduced the Anglican religion, also pursued an evangelical campaign to attract members to their faith. Christian missionary societies arrived during the British period, and were mainly Baptists, Methodists, Salvation Army and the Pentecostal Mission. They established smaller Christian denominations that still exist in Sri Lanka (MOECA, p. 15).

Languages

Current official languages of Sri Lanka are Sinhala and Tamil, which are used in commerce and government. English was the official language for commerce and government during the British colonial period from 1796 to 1948, and thereafter until 1955. It was spoken by upper classes of society, and used as the medium of instruction in private schools and prominent schools in larger cities and universities. During that period, competency in English was the key to status in society (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2008, p. 2).

Later use of local languages for commerce and government was instigated by the growing feeling of Sinhalese nationalism in Sri Lanka, which gathered momentum after the country gained independence from Britain in 1948. The push for a change to ‘swabasha’ (‘our own language’) was advocated by the Sinhala-educated intelligentsia, who were unable to compete for careers in commerce and government because of the predominance of English in administration and communication. Employers did not concede that qualifications in Sinhala or Tamil were adequate for these jobs if applicants were not competent in English (MOE, 2008, p. 2).

Although Sri Lankans known as the ‘Sinhalese-stream educated intelligentsia’ were acknowledged in their own villages (where Sinhala prevailed), they had in the past rarely been able to exert any effective power or influence on a national scale – even though they were greater in number than the English-educated elite. It could be argued that the reasons for using Sinhala and Tamil as official languages were to re-establish the importance of local languages, which had suffered decline during the period of foreign rule, and also as a means to provide equal opportunity for all. Nevertheless, English is still used today for commerce and international business transactions; it is spoken by the elite and is understood by most Sri Lankans (MOE, 2008, p. 2).

Mediums of instruction for primary and secondary schools are Sinhala and Tamil. Local languages are used at tertiary level, but in recent years there has been a shift back to the use of English, especially for science-based subjects (MOE, 2008, p. 3).

History of Education

The history of education in Sri Lanka may be divided into four distinct periods:

1. The Ancient Period (543 BC to 1500 AD);
2. The Portuguese Period (1505 to 1658);
3. The Dutch Period (1658 to 1796); and
4. The British Period (1796 to 1948).

(Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2002, p. 3)

Ancient Period (543 BC–1500 AD)

The central theme during the entire Ancient Period was the establishment of Buddhism as the way of life in Sri Lanka. All education was intrinsically connected to Buddhism. Buddhist monks were custodians and teachers of the faith, and, therefore, the unchallenged authority of formal education in the land (De Silva, 1981, p. 197).

Since the arrival of Vijaya and his followers in about 600 BC, the Brahmins (a priestly caste) enjoyed a prominent status in Sri Lanka. Members of the royal family received home-tutoring from Brahmins, and this form of education was called ‘Gurukula’ or ‘Gurugedara’ (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2002, p. 9).

Buddhist monasteries were chiefly responsible for the spread of education. ‘Pirivenas’ or monastic colleges were responsible for the education of clergy and lay students, and received royal patronage and community support (MOE, 2002, pp. 10–12).

As more monasteries or temples opened up in villages, more common people were drawn to hear priests (known as ‘bhikkus’) preaching doctrine (or ‘dhamma’). However, only priests and aspirants to priesthood were privileged to receive instruction about religious doctrine. At first, these temples pioneered primary education. Later, as quality and content of teaching improved, they also became institutions for secondary education. The next stage saw development of institutions for tertiary education called ‘Mahavihara’. These were larger temples with learned staff, research facilities and libraries (MOE, 2002, p. 13).

Education during the Ancient Period was primarily designed for a select few, mainly the sons of noblemen and Buddhist monks. It was not intended for the rest of the population, who, as a consequence, were illiterate. For those privileged to be allowed education, curriculum taught included Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit languages. Academic education also included art, painting, and literature. Those receiving technical education were taught subjects such as fabric-weaving, metalwork, gold and silver craft, clay pottery, tailoring, architecture, and irrigation construction; knowledge of the latter helped support the country’s agrarian economy (Withanage, 1980, pp. 4–5).

Although Buddhism dominated educational practices, Tamils also had access to education during the Ancient Period. It was based on Hindu traditions and taught by

Brahmins who introduced sacred Hindu texts. Education for Tamils was conducted in the homes of Brahmins or in schools located near their temples. Despite religious differences, curriculum was similar to that of the Sinhalese (MOECA, 1969, p. 6).

The system of education during the Ancient Period was not documented or codified as a policy, but was a tradition that was the exclusive and unchallenged responsibility of the clergy. Punchi (2001, p. 366) describes this tradition as restrictive, because it was solely for the clergy who imparted their knowledge to the privileged few who received it. The author draws a comparison of education of the Ancient Period in Sri Lanka to that of medieval Europe. Notably, Christian monks were also exclusive custodians of education, with abbeys and monasteries forming educational centres. Rights to education were likewise conferred only on aspirants to the priesthood and to sons of noblemen.

Portuguese Period (1505–1658)

Impact of Portuguese Rule on Education

The main aim of the Portuguese education system was to convert the local population to the Catholic religion. Education was used to win the confidence and allegiance of the Sinhalese and Tamils, but it was only available to those who adopted Catholicism. Curriculum consisted of Catholic religious studies, reading, writing, arithmetic and languages, which included Portuguese, Arabic, Greek and Latin. The medium of instruction was Portuguese, and teachers were mostly from the Catholic clergy. Schools were built adjacent to churches so that students were constantly exposed to, and influenced by, Roman Catholic rituals and practices. As such, education served to reinforce efforts of the Portuguese conversion campaign (Don Peter, 1969, pp. 293–96).

The Portuguese tried vigorously, if not fanatically, to force religious, and, to a lesser extent, educational, change in Sri Lanka. Sixteenth-century Portuguese Catholicism was largely intolerant, and caught Buddhism in Sri Lanka at its decline. The Portuguese discriminated brutally against traditional religions of the country by destroying Buddhist and Hindu temples and giving temple lands to Roman Catholic religious orders to build churches and establish schools. Their emphasis on proselytisation spurred development and standardisation of educational institutions. Many mission schools were established in the maritime provinces under their control. Records of the Roman Catholic Church in

Sri Lanka indicate that during the Portuguese Period, there were twenty-five schools in Jaffna and fifty-five schools in Kotte (MOE, 2002, p. 10).

Instruction in mission schools was mainly in Portuguese. Sinhala and Tamil were used only to interpret and facilitate teaching. In time, Portuguese became the language of the educated and also that of the upper classes of Sri Lanka. Those who attended missionary schools, especially the upper classes, were taught to read and write Portuguese. This, together with acceptance of the Catholic religion, opened the door to employment and preferential treatment under the Portuguese. Learning Portuguese was also useful for trade and social intercourse, as well as for social prestige (Don Peter, 1969, p. 297).

The Portuguese system of education offered girls elementary education in parish schools. This was a major improvement, because girls did not receive an education under the Buddhist system. The Portuguese, however, did not provide them entry into secondary schools or seminaries, where tertiary education was given (Don Peter, 1969, p. 297).

With reference to the attitude of the Portuguese towards learning local languages in Sri Lanka, Don Peter (1978, pp. 202–3) states that Portuguese colonial administrators were generally not interested in learning indigenous languages and culture. In fact, he states that there appears to be no evidence of any Portuguese official conversant in Sinhala or Tamil. Portuguese was the language of administration and officials communicated with local people through interpreters. Direct communication became possible only when locals themselves learned the language of their rulers either by the education system or by continuous association with them (Don Peter, 1969, pp. 298–99).

Interestingly, the only Portuguese who learned local languages in Sri Lanka were from the Catholic clergy, who did so to expressly educate and convert the masses to Catholicism. They realised that knowledge and competency in local languages would help their missionary efforts. Driven by religious zeal, the clergy translated Portuguese and Latin prayers and scripture into local languages. Several of such books, translated by Catholic priest Father Jacome Gonsalvez from around 1600, are still used today as devotional prayer books (Peiris, 1969, pp. 324–25).

Dutch Period (1658–1796)

Impact of Dutch Rule on Education

The aims of the Dutch were similar to those of the Portuguese. In this instance, it was the conversion of local people to the Dutch Reformed Church. The Dutch also sought to suppress the spread of Catholicism. However, unlike the Portuguese, education was now controlled by colonial administrators and not by the clergy. The Dutch system of education displayed more sophistication and purpose than the Portuguese structure, with inspectorial roles of accountability. It also had the advantage of building on an established foundation; however, it had to contend with many years of Portuguese influence on language, custom and religion (Mottau, 1969, p. 304).

The Dutch lost no time in recognising that schools could be used to convert the people to the Dutch Reformed Church and to destroy “the influence of Popery” (Jayasuriya, 1997, p. 59). It could be argued that loyalty of Catholic converts established over 160 years needed to be undermined for the safety of the Dutch themselves. Consequently, the Dutch set about severing the religious bond with Roman Catholicism. The link between proselytisation and education established by the Portuguese was maintained, but with greater skill and rigidity. The Dutch took over schools begun by the Portuguese, revitalised them, and added to their number by the policy of attaching schools to every church (Jayasuriya, 1997, p. 60).

The school curriculum offered by the Dutch provided a simple system of instruction of reading, writing and arithmetic. It also provided instruction in local languages, which differed from the Portuguese system. The Dutch not only taught newly-converted people to read and write as a part of academic education, but their system of education also served to train local people to assist in government offices (Mottau, 1969, pp. 305–6).

The Dutch adopted a more regimented and legalistic approach to education than the Portuguese. Regular inspections by the local minister of religion and by civil officials ensured satisfactory standards in schools. This could be viewed as the earliest form of school moderation, which was the result of the strict accountability element in the Dutch education system. It could be argued that the Calvinistic discipline of serving God based

on scripture influenced their rigid approach to education, which was also reflected in the way they governed the colony (Mottau, 1969, pp. 306–7).

Two seminaries were established in Jaffna and Colombo for higher education, and more talented pupils from all over the island were educated there at the State's expense.

These seminaries trained students as teachers and catechists in the expanding school system, and also as clergymen. Instruction was largely in the vernacular, but some Latin and Dutch was also introduced. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the practice of sending a few students to the Netherlands for higher education had begun (Mottau, 1969, p. 307).

The Dutch education system was both free and compulsory. Schoolmasters maintained a register of students, and fines were imposed to ensure pupils' regular attendance.

Truancy was not tolerated (De Silva, 1981, p. 197).

Unlike practices of the Portuguese period, large numbers of girls attended school under this system; however, parents were reluctant to keep their daughters in school after puberty. All schools on the island were in session throughout the year. There were no set terms or long vacations. The only holidays observed were Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Ascension Day, and days specially appointed for prayer and thanksgiving. Every day in the week except Sunday was a school day. Wednesdays and Saturdays were half-session days. Schools were in session from eight to eleven o'clock in the mornings and from two to five o'clock in the afternoons (De Silva, 1981, p. 198).

The keystone of the Dutch educational administration was the 'School Board' (*Scholarchale Vergadering*), established in 1663. It was a provincial board of education, with each district given its own school board. This was usually made up of a president who was always second in authority in the district, and a few others chosen from leading men in the civil and military service. The chief clergyman of the station was always a member of the board. The governor, who also appointed a clergy member as his secretary, nominated all the members (Mottau, 1969, p. 305).

The Dutch education system was influenced by a major innovation of the Dutch East India Company. That was the regular system of registration in the villages. Under this system, the headmaster of the parish school was entrusted with maintaining various records relating to the residents of each parish. Schoolmasters were paid by the State,

and also acted as registrars of births, deaths and marriages. The schoolmaster's dual role as educator and legislator gave him information and control of the community, which he used in the management of school admissions (Van Goor, 1978, pp. 69–70).

Under the Dutch system, the schoolmaster only permitted children from marriages performed under rites of the Dutch Reformed Church to receive school education, and children had to be baptised into the Church itself. Under the Dutch, therefore, school admission was not based on academic merit or scholastic capability, but merely on legal, religious and moral criteria. Local people had to conform and convert to the Reformed Church to receive education and school admission for their children (Van Goor, 1978, p. 41).

The Dutch found it necessary to learn local languages, but again only for the purposes of reaching the local population with the Protestant religion and to facilitate education. Elaborating the need to learn local languages, Mottau (1969, p. 304) states that the Dutch encouraged their ministers or pastors ('Predikanten') to learn native languages by giving them higher salaries or additional allowances. As Governor Falck reported: "... the surest way of reaching the people was through the medium of their own language" (Mottau, 1969, p. 310).

British Period (1796–1948)

Impact of English Rule on Education

The British were in Sri Lanka for 152 years – almost as long as the Portuguese. Their purpose was systematically structured towards building the British Empire. The British had the advantage of building on both the Portuguese and Dutch foundations. The education system in Sri Lanka during the British period continued the Portuguese and Dutch systems, with conversion to Christianity still being the main purpose of education; however, the latter was not as harshly implemented as with previous colonial rulers (Ruberu, 1969, p. 360).

Although the existing education system was maintained in Sri Lanka, the British introduced the English language into the school system. They established Anglican mission schools where English was taught to more elite sectors of society, primarily to

prepare them to work for the British government in local administration and commercial enterprises (Ruberu, 1969, p. 62).

During the British Period, many Christian missionary societies of different Protestant denominations entered the education field, and used child education to convert the local population from traditional religions and Catholicism to a particular Christian denomination (De Silva, 1969, p. 376).

The British made education in Sri Lanka available to everyone, but in the process of doing so created two schooling systems. The first was located in major cities, where English was used to teach primary to tertiary levels; the second was located in rural areas, where Sinhala or Tamil were used to teach primary to Grade Five levels. Rural schools, often referred to as 'village schools', were considered inferior by those taught in the English medium, thereby creating a class system in education. Deprivation of education for poorer classes that existed during the Ancient Period had been partly overcome during the period of European colonisation. These two distinct levels of education developed by the British continue to be contentious educational issues in Sri Lanka to the present day (De Silva, 1969, p. 379).

The British instituted many reforms in education mainly because they were confronted by a growing demand for better and more accessible education by the local people. In addition, the colonial office wanted the population to be provided with better educational qualifications for administrative positions (Perera, 1969, pp. 387–90). (See Chapter Three for a review of educational reform).

The Colonial Under-Secretary from Whitehall in England controlled the education system in Sri Lanka. Numerous governors like Robert Brownrigg, Governor of Sri Lanka in 1812, paid more attention to education and to conversion of local people to Christianity than to administering the colony. In turn, this influenced the colonial office to support missionary efforts of different Christian denominations in Sri Lanka (De Silva, 1965, p. 25).

The 'Missionary Period' from 1805 to 1824 saw the rise of many Christian missionary societies entering the education system, and schools were opened in all provinces of the country (De Silva, 1965, p. 27). Once again, the main educational aim of these missions was religious conversion. Missionaries believed they held the key to salvation of all

human beings. To achieve conversion of the native people, they toiled unceasingly and with great dedication amidst hardships of working in a foreign land. Mission schools were managed by Baptist, Wesleyan, American and Church of England missionary societies. As a consequence, there was continuous missionary rivalry between Protestant missions and the Roman Catholic Church to secure the power base of education in Sri Lanka (De Silva, pp. 391–92).

From around the mid-1800s, the British government realised that the cost of administering the colonies with resident British nationals was an escalating economic burden. One strategy to overcome the problem was to train and educate the local population to be sufficiently competent to fill these positions. As a result of this economic rationale, a new education system was promulgated (Perera, 1969, p. 392).

A Commission was appointed for administration of all schools. The Colombo Academy, which was administered from England, was started in 1836 to train teachers in the English medium. This meant that there was little structural support for vernacular schools that were spread all over the country. It could be argued that this action resulted in a lack of equity in education for the many rural students denied the opportunity for a quality English education – which, in reality, was only available to city students from upper classes (Godage, 1965, pp. 399–401).

Resurgence

In the mid-nineteenth century, many Christian schools were opened, and Buddhists and Hindus were compelled to attend Christian schools. To counter this trend, Buddhist organisations and leading Buddhist priests started schools in lands and buildings donated by parents in various provinces of the country. These were registered as ‘Assisted Buddhist Schools’. Similarly, leading Hindus and Muslims began their own schools and colleges in different urban centres of the country (Jayasuriya, 1976, pp. 23–27 & De Silva, 1981, pp. 412–16).

Thus, by the beginning of the twentieth century, education opportunities in Sri Lanka were offered by new government, missionary, Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim schools. The existence of different types of schools led to problems of management, distribution of government aid, and accessibility to quality education. This in turn gave rise to

legislation which would reform the educational system, and in doing so, attempt to resolve such problems. These educational reforms are dealt with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2: EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN SRI LANKA

Introduction

Education in Sri Lanka had undergone many reforms after it became a British colony in 1815 (Perera, 1969, p. 386). These reforms were aimed, in the main, to improve the quality of education and provide better access to education for all.

Major educational reforms in Sri Lanka occurred in five periods:

1. British Colonial Reforms, comprising the:
 - Colebrook Commission of 1832;
 - Morgan Committee of 1865; and
 - Education Ordinance of 1920.
2. Pre-Independence Reforms, comprising the Education Ordinances of 1939 to 1947.
3. Post-Independence Reforms, comprising:
 - *Special Provisions Act No. 5* of 1960;
 - Education Reform of 1972; and
 - Education Reform of 1977.
4. Educational Reforms of 1991, incorporating the *National Education Commission Act*.
5. Education Reforms of 1997.

(Ministry of Education, 1997)

This chapter will attempt to analyse the main goal of each reform and outcomes derived after implementation. It will also analyse the impact of each reform on quality of education, equality of access to education, and address the influence exerted by major educational reforms in relation to English competency levels.

1. British Colonial Reforms

Colebrooke Commission and Educational Reforms (1832)

A Commission of Inquiry was appointed by the British Parliament on 25 July 1822 to report on three colonial territories: the Cape Province of South Africa, the island of Mauritius and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) (Perera, 1969, p. 387).

The Commission was led by Lieutenant Colonel W.M.G. Colebrooke, who had some experience of Indian and colonial affairs. He was assisted by C.H. Cameron, a Scottish lawyer. The report consisted of three parts: the first two on administration and revenues of Sri Lanka, and the third on judicial establishments. Proposals concerning education were included in the first part, which related to the administration of the colonies (Perera, 1969, p. 387).

Commissioners were instructed to report on the state of education in Sri Lanka and to ascertain the extent to which the colonial administration supported the Church of England and its religious institutions that provided education. They were also required to report whether, and in what manner, the national education system in Sri Lanka could be improved (Perera, 1969, p. 388).

The Colebrooke Commission was completed in 1832. Colebrook was apparently unconcerned with fulfilling all requirements of the Commission; in particular, he did not question the close relationship between Church and State that existed in Sri Lanka. Although he was aware of the influence missionary work had in education, he did not recommend special grants or favours to the Church. Rather, his recommendations allowed missionary activity to continue because this involved minimal costs to the British government (Perera, 1969, pp. 388–89).

An element of humanitarianism was another important aspect of Colebrooke's recommendations. Embodied in them was the liberal ideal of raising the education standard for locals in the colony. However, this ideal was tempered with a more utilitarian motive. Colebrooke envisaged that providing better education to local people would improve their employment prospects in the public service – where they would be paid relatively lower wages compared to the higher salaries and conditions enjoyed by British expatriates. Notably, this strategy was similar to financial reforms he also

recommended, which provided that Sri Lankans be employed in the public service (De Silva, 1956, p. 268).

To achieve his financial reforms, Colebrooke suggested that local people should have some knowledge of general principles of law and trade. He also recommended gaining knowledge of finance, which would assist them in administrative roles. Further, he realised that to pursue these reforms, it was imperative that Sri Lankans be competent in English (Perera, 1969, p. 390).

One strategy Colebrooke employed to achieve English competency was the establishment of a local and affordable institution of higher education. This would involve training local people to teach English and the curriculum necessary for future employment in administration. Until this time, the only way to advance in the public service was to be selected by the government for education at an English university. Thus, Colebrooke sought an alternative solution to sending Sri Lankans to overseas universities. He recommended the establishment of a college of higher education in Colombo, the capital of what was then Ceylon. The college, known as the Colombo Academy, was established in 1836, and became the University of Ceylon in 1921 (Perera, 1969, p. 391).

At the time of the Colebrooke Commission, there were two types of schools: government schools and those run by missionary organisations. Missionary schools taught English in their curriculum and also used it as a medium of instruction. Government schools taught local languages and used them solely as the mediums of instruction (Perera, 1969, pp. 392–93).

Colebrooke was determined to offer all students the opportunity to be competent in English and to enable their employment in the public service. Therefore, he recommended that all government schools be placed under a newly formed School Commission controlled by the Anglican clergy, whose job it was to enforce his recommendations. Another of Colebrooke's recommendations was the requirement that all principals and senior teachers in government schools be appointed by the School Commission, which in turn would compel them to acquire English competency to teach in that language. Lastly, in an effort to ensure English would be taught in all schools, Colebrooke recommended that in a locality where there was a missionary school (where

English was taught) and a government school (where local languages were taught), the government school would be closed down (Perera, 1969, p. 393).

Unfortunately, as a result of Colebrooke's recommendations, national languages of Sinhala and Tamil were largely neglected in the school curriculum. A further consequence of these reforms was that more traditional forms of education, such as those taught in temples and schools by local priests, were dismissed as being without merit (Perera, 1969, p. 395).

Therefore, the main outcome of the Colebrooke Commission was that priority be given to teaching English in all schools. A number of measures were implemented as a way to achieve this, including establishment of a College of Higher Education. However, these measures were enforced to the detriment of local languages and culture in Sri Lanka.

Morgan Committee and Educational Reform (1865)

The Morgan Committee was appointed in 1865 to investigate problems in Sri Lanka's educational system that occurred some thirty-three years after the Colebrooke Commission. The main problem was inefficient administration of the school system by the Central School Commission. This included unfair distribution of government aid to schools and neglect of local languages in education (Sumathipala, 1968, pp. 13–16).

The Morgan Committee consisted of a Queen's Advocate (R.F. Morgan), the Surveyor-General (A.P. Fyere), the Principal Collector of Customs (J. Parsons) and two members from the Legislative Council of Ceylon (Ms Coomaraswama and Mr Martenz). The Committee's report was published in 1867 (Sumathipala, 1968, p. 16).

The Morgan Committee examined workings of the Central School Commission, which had earlier replaced the School Commission because of its inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Unlike its predecessor, the Central School Commission was represented by all Christian denominations, not just the Anglican clergy as had occurred after the Colebrooke Commission (Sumathipala, 1968, p. 17).

However, after the Central School Commission was established, the government faced continual conflict between the Anglican clergy and other Christian denominations, particularly with regard to distribution of government aid to schools. This was further exacerbated by demands from non-Christian groups such as Buddhists, Hindus and

Muslims for aid to their schools – support that had previously been denied them (Sumathipala, 1968, p. 14).

The Morgan Committee recommended abolition of the Central School Commission and replacing it with the Department of Public Instruction. Other recommendations were mainly related to reorganisation of the school system, with strong emphasis on acquisition of English competency throughout the country. Importantly, the recommendations also included aid grants for all non-government schools, with the exception of temple schools (the Morgan Committee was only sympathetic to Christian missionaries, evidenced by the fact that four out of five in the Committee were Christian) (Perera, 1969, p. 293).

Another agenda for the Morgan Committee was to respond to criticism at the government regarding the demise of local languages, which occurred after the Colebrooke Commission. This decline occurred despite reintroducing local languages into education in 1847, when the Central School Commission took over missionary schools (Sumathipala, 1968, pp. 16–17). In addition, new schools were established at this time to teach local languages. They could do this because a local language training school was established previously in 1845 (Sumathipala, 1968, pp. 16–17).

Unfortunately, the government faced a financial crisis the same year and many of these schools were closed. Economic improvement in 1852 revived them, but they were again closed in 1857 due to a change in education policy. Such continuous disruption had a deleterious effect on the growth of local languages, causing Sri Lankan representatives on the Legislative Council to express their agitation and demand a change of educational policy (Perera, 1969, p. 394).

In response to this demand, the Morgan Committee recommended that the government open vernacular schools in all parts of the country to provide elementary education for the general population. Fees in these schools were only nominal as many of the students were from low socio-economic rural areas. It was also recommended that an industrial school be established in a populous part of Colombo to provide teacher training facilities for vernacular village schools (Sumathipala, 1968, pp. 16–17).

At the same time, the Committee recommended that elementary schools using English as the medium of instruction be abolished in favour of schools teaching both English

and local languages. It was further recommended that such schools be established in every town. These schools were a stepping-stone to English medium secondary schools. It was also recommended that central schools providing practical and commercial education in English be established in provincial capitals (Sumathipala, 1968, p. 17).

The Committee also recommended that the Colombo Academy, established in 1836 in response to the Colebrooke Commission, continue to train teachers for English medium schools. Furthermore, the Academy was to prepare students for higher education. Scholarships were offered to the best students of the Academy to enter universities in England (this replaced an earlier arrangement of entry to the University of Calcutta) (Sumathipala, 1968, p. 17).

In summary, because of recommendations of the Morgan Committee, the administrative structure of education in Sri Lanka became the responsibility of the Central School Commission. Aid was provided to all non-government Christian schools. Although the Morgan Committee did recommend a widespread system of elementary vernacular education for the masses, the main thrust of the recommendations was promoting English competency and reorganising the school system to achieve this goal. In doing so, the Committee followed the footsteps of Colebrooke who desired to perpetuate an education system producing people who were Ceylonese “in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” (Sumathipala, 1968, p. 18). As a consequence, the masses in the new vernacular schools that could not afford an English education were made to unduly venerate English culture.

Education Ordinance (1920)

The Education Ordinance of 1920 was a comprehensive legal enactment. Provisions of the ordinance had an important bearing, mainly on interaction between State and private agencies as education providers. The ordinance also had an impact on education funding, and addressed the relationship between State and local government bodies involved in education (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 545).

Provision of education in Sri Lanka in the nineteenth century was a partnership that had evolved between the State on one hand, and private agencies on the other. As a consequence, by the beginning of the twentieth century, administration of education was governmental but actual provision of education was largely in the hands of missionaries

and other private agencies. However, as a result of the census conducted in 1901 and reports written about it, the government was compelled to consider a change to its education system (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 546).

Census statistics drew particular attention to the low average results achieved by school students. This point was made particularly clear in the Wace Commission Report of 1905. The government was criticised for not providing schools in localities where denominational schools were located. Later, in 1911, Denham, who was the Census Controller, reported that in Sri Lanka almost sixty per cent of the male population and ninety per cent of the female population were still illiterate (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 547).

Denham asserted that as long as the existing system was allowed to continue, there was no hope of a planned expansion of educational facilities for the country. The Bridge Committee Report that followed in 1912 made further strong criticism of government policy of the State-Church partnership in education, and condemned the unplanned expansion of denominational schools as being highly inefficient and entirely prejudicial to the economy (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 547).

Roman Catholic and Anglican denominations were the main beneficiaries in the State-Church partnership, and as a consequence were not in favour of change (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 550).

There were, however, a few minor Christian denominations that opposed this partnership in education, but the main opposition came from Buddhists who were vehemently against domination of the educational system by Christians – particularly in a country where Buddhism was by far the largest religious denomination. The intensity of their argument increased even further after the founding of the Buddhist Congress in 1917. The Congress gained much public support – so strong, in fact, that it challenged the long-established Christian missionary institutions. It demanded an end to the State-Church partnership in education and greater State provision of education (Jayaweera, 1956, pp. 550–51).

Another motivating factor for change in education during this period was the economic development of Sri Lanka, specifically from a traditionally agricultural one to a commercial plantation economy. This resulted in increased wealth of many of the people. This newly acquired wealth led to increased confidence, particularly with regard

to seeking greater political power, and in turn, constitutional change. People came to realise that they could not participate in politics without a better education, particularly in English, since the constitution, legislation and administration were English-based. To achieve this goal, they exercised constant pressure on the government for education reform and specifically for change relating to State control of education (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 551).

Governor Sir William Manning (1918–1925) conceded to pressure for reforms in the education system and constitution. As a consequence, legislation was enacted in 1919 to form a policy to gradually replace denominational schools with government ones, except in areas where the student majority was of a particular religious denomination (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 551).

The immediate effect of the legislation was the expansion of government and aided vernacular schools. In time, it resulted in yearly increases in the number of State schools; however, denominationally aided schools began to register declining numbers (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 552).

However, the most important result of the change occurred in the value of grants and the proportional method that government aid was granted. Grants now extended to all non-government schools regardless of denomination. The new policy received considerable opposition from Christian denominations because it curbed their activities in villages and closed many of their schools (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 552).

The change in the way aid was granted also included a departure from the old system of payment formerly based on the number of enrolled students to one now based on student attendance (Jayaweera, 1956, pp. 552–53).

However, this proved disadvantageous because of varied conditions existing in some parts of the country. For instance, in certain areas malaria was prevalent, while in others, extra labour was needed during harvest seasons – both of which resulted in student absenteeism. There was also competition from neighbouring schools to improve student numbers to increase their share of aid grants. This resulted in students moving from one school to another, with considerable variation of attendance from year to year, which impacted on funds needed for operating schools (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 552).

Despite its shortcomings, a positive aspect of the Education Bill of 1920 was that priority was given to appropriation of funds for education. This was in stark contrast to previous arrangements where funding for items such as public works took precedence over education funding. Furthermore, this legislation changed the method of funding from haphazard grants and casual endowments to regular sums drawn from revenue of the colony. Previously, local government authorities such as urban, rural and town councils were responsible for financial and managerial support of schools in their area. They also exercised control over school staffing and administration. This proved ineffective and inefficient, and so control was transferred to central government. Members of the Legislative Council strongly supported this policy because they were now able to exert control over educational opportunities in their electorates and could do so without interference from local government authorities (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 552).

Based on this legislation, a Board of Education was established, represented by members of all denominations to act in an advisory capacity to the government. However, there was an imbalance in denominational representation on the Board. At this time, Sri Lanka's population comprised more than sixty per cent Buddhists, twenty-two per cent Hindus and less than ten per cent Christians. Despite this, there was only one Hindu, one Muslim and three Buddhists out of a total of twenty Board members (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 552).

Although the Board was originally meant to act in an advisory capacity only, it soon exercised strong influence over both the educational system and successive directors of education. In subsequent years it acquired much power, resulting in a bitter struggle between its supporters and the Executive Council for Education appointed by the Minister of Education (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 553).

The 1920 Ordinance also provided direction regarding religious instruction in schools, stipulating that such instruction was not permitted in government schools. This did not seem to satisfy the majority in the Buddhist community, who were predominantly catered for by State schools. As a consequence, pressure mounted for a new conscience clause, whereby State schools were given the choice to teach religious education if the students requested it. Subsequently, in 1927, a motion was introduced in the Legislative Council to provide religious training for all children attending government or

government-assisted schools where compulsory attendance was enforced (Jayaweera, 1956, p. 553).

In summary, it can be seen that the 1920 Ordinance attempted to address the illiteracy level of the population and initiate expansion of government schools. Aid grants were made available to schools of all denominations and were based on student attendance. Education funding became a government priority. Control of education by local government authorities ceased and was replaced by the central government, and control of education was centralised. A Board of Education was established, though it did not fairly represent the ratio of religious denominations in the country. Christian sectors still continued to provide education, but their growth was reduced. Christian religious education, which had previously been forced upon all students regardless of individual faiths, was replaced by religious studies relating to the spiritual beliefs of each student.

2. Pre-Independence Reforms (1939–1947)

Education Ordinances (1939–1947)

Education Ordinance No. 31 of 1939 entailed the first legislation of educational reform in Sri Lanka that shifted emphasis from a colonial to a nationalist perspective. It was enacted to revise previous reforms and ensure provision of better education for the future. It was followed by several other amendments made in 1939, 1945, 1946 and 1947, parts of which are still in force today (Munasinghe, 1957, p. 641).

The most revolutionary educational reforms of this period were recommendations of the Special Committee of 1943. These introduced free education and made the local languages of Sinhala and Tamil the mediums of instruction at primary school level. It also made English a compulsory second language from Standard 3 upwards (see page 12). The scheme of free education from kindergarten to university level was put into operation on 1 October 1945, but was later revised to provide that even if school fees were abolished, students had to pay only a minimum sports fee (Munasinghe, 1957, pp. 642–43).

The impact of free education and introduction of local languages resulted in a phenomenal increase in the student population, with corresponding provision of

accommodation and teaching facilities. This was evidenced in the comparative statistical figures for 1938 and 1948. In 1938, there were 5,065 schools and 19,460 students; by 1948, this rose to 6,236 schools with 1,181,422 students. The number of teachers rose from 20,628 in 1938 to 32,870 in 1948 (Munasinghe, 1957, p. 648).

However, even this comparison is problematic, because while education was free, the legislation provided that “compulsory education is in substantial measure, not compulsory” (Munasinghe, 1957, p. 649). This situation was exacerbated by a lack of schools in certain areas, and also an absence of schools of the same denomination as local families, which was reason enough for parents preventing their children from attending school. Together, these factors contributed to the government’s failure to enforce compulsory education in Sri Lanka.

Despite the 1945 legislation’s inability to enforce compulsory education, the free education scheme resulted in an explosive increase in those seeking school admission. This necessitated immediate adjustments and improvisations in school administration. Logistics involved recruitment and staff transfers, doubling school sessions, and the need for larger classrooms – all of which had to be undertaken quickly (Munasinghe, 1957, p. 650).

In 1947, the government acknowledged that introduction of free education had led to many *ad hoc* arrangements, and, therefore, enacted Ordinance No. 26 to regularise its actions (Munasinghe, 1957, p. 650).

The 1945 reforms paved the way for benefits of free education to be extended to rural areas. Government Central Schools were opened in 1944, and provided secondary education up to Higher School Certificate level in the English medium (Munasinghe, 1957, p. 651). At the time, there were many rural areas in Sri Lanka of only a few inhabitants in scattered groups with no access to educational facilities. To address this problem, primary schools were provisionally established in temples or mosques. As student attendances grew, a nucleus was created for the establishment of future government schools (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2004).

With the introduction of free education, the government offered former State-aided schools the option of either joining the free scheme (and thus enjoying benefits of increased State aid), or remaining outside the scheme and using fees levied to meet

costs, thereby forgoing all State assistance (Munasinghe, 1957, p. 653). Not surprisingly, a large number of schools joined the scheme in 1945. A few privately-run denominational schools decided against the free scheme and continued to levy fees, and were, therefore, independent of State control. These private schools became exclusive institutions, attracting better teachers and providing higher standards; as a result, they were highly sought by the upper class. This situation, in fact, continues to be the case in the present day (MOE, 2004).

During this time, the government acknowledged problems in the management of assisted schools. Thus, it recommended that where management of any assisted school was requested, it was to be placed under State control – so giving administrative and financial responsibility to government agencies (MOE, 2004).

The government also recognised the rapid growth of unaided schools following the 1920 ordinance. It was aware that many of them were run by small enterprises that lacked both experience and expertise in education. However, no recommendations were made to control them at the time. Such awareness was translated into action, when in subsequent ordinances of 1947 and 1951, the Director of Education was empowered to close unaided schools where there were grounds for complaint. The consequence of this legislation slowed the rate at which new non-State schools were opened (Munasinghe, 1957, p. 653).

Another important change effected by the 1945 ordinance was the transference of power to the Executive Committee for Education, who was charged with making regulations and policies. In addition, because of this ordinance and subject to State Council approval, the Minister of Education was vested with powers to make and enforce regulations on educational matters, including power to control denominational schools. This legislation also gave the Director of Education, who was responsible to the Minister, the authority to appoint, suspend or dismiss managers of assisted schools. In turn, local Advisory Committees were appointed to advise the Director on education matters in their respective areas. Local Committees replaced the former District Committees and served to decentralise some of the educational power (MOE, 2004).

In summary, the education ordinances of 1939 to 1947 in Sri Lanka responded to the needs of a country seeking to establish national identity through education by teaching

Sinhala and Tamil in schools. The legislation also made education free and compulsory, and in principle created an equal opportunity for everyone to receive an education. The establishment of more central schools in rural areas and nuclear schools in remote communities further enhanced this opportunity. Execution of these reforms was facilitated by ordinances that redefined the administrative authority of the Minister of Education and his Director, their advisory boards and committees.

Embodied in the ordinances of this period and achieved through transfer of political power to the people, were educational concepts born of idealism to eliminate social injustices of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Sumathipala, 1965, pp. 287–90). A key principle was that no child should be deprived of the opportunity for equal education despite circumstances of birth. Educational reforms deriving from this sought emancipation and elimination of injustices which essentially occurred because of an economically and socially unequal education system. In reality, however, the government failed to obtain agreement from some denominational schools with respect to acceptance of free education, and these schools continued to levy fees as private institutions. This resulted in the creation of exclusive schools for the rich, thus diluting the ideal of equal opportunity in education.

Such principles of the time are reflected in the following statement made by the Minister of Education, which underpinned Sri Lanka's national system of education:

If it is going to be a national education, let it certainly be religious in spirit, let it be patriotic in tone. If it is going to be a national system of education, let it draw its inspiration from the historic past, and not from recent times. If it is going to be a system of national education let it be based on principles of justice, equality and mutual service. If it is going to be a system of national education, let it be under national control. If it is going to be national system of education, let it be directed to their physical, moral and intellectual welfare. (Munasinghe, 1957, p. 666)

3. Post-Independence Reforms (1960, 1972, 1977)

Sri Lanka was granted independence in 1947. This signified not only governmental changes, but also to the changes in the nation's education system (MOE, 2004).

The most important post-independence reform in Sri Lanka encompassed the *Education (Amendment) Act, No. 5* of 1951, transferring complete ownership, and thus control, of all schools to the State. A consequence of these reforms was further changes to the

entire educational system. Unhindered by the previous system of dual control, changes were made to policies, teaching methods and the syllabus (MOE, 2004).

Educationists and politicians undertook these reforms to ensure that education would be more dynamic and equitable, and, as a result, social change would be accelerated (Sumathipala, 1965, p. 404).

A core component of this legislation was the reclassification of grants to government-aided schools. These were changed to grants that paid teachers' salaries and basic maintenance, as well as allowances used to maintain ancillary services. The result was that it made schools and the Department of Education more accountable. The change also provided an incentive to assisted schools in the form of special grants for the education of pupils from different faiths, a concession not previously available (Sumathipala, 1965, p. 405).

Demand for full State control of education resulting from these reforms had occurred because of the push from non-Christians, particularly in response to the outcome of the 1943 Special Committee on Education. At Committee hearings, some Buddhist and Hindu factions expressed the view that the Christian community enjoyed undue social and economic advantages from being educated in State-aided schools. To correct this situation, they demanded that all denominational schools be placed under direct control of the State (Sumathipala, 1965, p. 407).

This push was pursued most strongly by the 'All Ceylon Buddhist Congress' representing Buddhists, which was still the major religious denomination in the country and therefore the most powerful faction. They continued to pressure the government to take full responsibility for education and thereby end the system of dual control. They argued that this would ensure that the non-Christian population, and particularly the Buddhists, would be given an opportunity for improved social and economic benefits through better education (Sumathipala, 1965, pp. 401–2).

In pursuit of its objective, the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress received government endorsement to set up The Buddhist Committee of Inquiry in 1954. In 1956, the Committee published the Buddhist Commission Report, which concluded that Buddhists experienced many socio-economic disadvantages – the fundamental cause of which was the education system of dual control. To rectify this situation, it

recommended that all assisted schools and training colleges be taken over by the State (Buddhist Commission Report, cited in Sumathipala, 1965, pp. 401–2).

There was general opposition to this recommendation from Christian denominations, but particularly from the Catholics, who published a commentary on the Buddhist Commission Report. The 1957 commentary re-examined charges made at the dual control education system, and was entitled ‘A Companion to the Buddhist Commission Report’. The government did not respond to the commentary; instead, following widespread public agitation against the Catholic viewpoint, and also with apparent politically motivated expediency, it passed legislation to control all assisted schools and training colleges (Sumathipala, 1968, p. 409).

Full State Control of Education

Enactment of the Assisted Schools and Training Colleges (Special Provisions) Act No.5 of 1960 and the Assisted Schools and Training Colleges (Supplementary Provisions) Act No.8 of 1961, brought both administration and ownership of assisted schools and training colleges under State control. This included control of land, buildings and equipment, and all material used in the schools and colleges. The Director of Education now presided over administration of these institutions (Sumathipala, 1968, pp. 409–10).

There were, however, exemptions granted under these Acts for certain schools to remain outside State control. This applied to schools opting to function as non-fee-levying independent schools, and also to those that did not enter the free education scheme when it was first introduced. With enactment of these Acts, the entire school system of Sri Lanka, with the exception of the aforementioned few, came under full State control. As a consequence, implementation of a uniform education policy was facilitated – a situation previously impossible (Sumathipala, 1968, p. 411).

These new Acts set education on an uninterrupted course, providing impetus and direction for significant change. Initially, this included changes to the structure of the Education Department, which in turn led to a process of decentralisation, changes in educational planning and policy-making, and the opportunity to scrutinise and revitalise education content (MOE, 2004).

As State responsibility for education broadened beyond mere financial support, several research programs were initiated, with a view to developing teaching techniques and preparing suitable material relating to national culture and economic needs. Most outstanding of these were production of school textbooks in various subjects, preparation of work syllabuses and subsequent drawing up of detailed courses, and the introduction of new teaching methods (MOE, 2004).

In 1960, two important education reports were published. The first was the Report of the Committee on Non-school-going Children in March 1960; the second was the Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Teaching of English in Ceylon Schools in April 1960 (MOE, 2004).

The Report of the Committee on Non-school-going Children concluded that contrary to previous reports and popular belief, lack of schools was a major cause of non-attendance. Furthermore, it found that there was no evidence linking increasing juvenile delinquency with school non-attendance, as in fact, there had been no significant increase in the incidence of non-attendance at school. The Committee recommended that to eliminate any doubt regarding this matter, regulations be made regarding implementation of a compulsory school age, particularly among the rural population where non-attendance was a problem (MOE, 2004).

As such, the Committee also suggested local authorities be given power to enforce school attendance when needed. Furthermore, with respect to non-school-going children with physical and mental disabilities, it recommended establishment of special schools to minimise their level of non-attendance. Finally, as use of child labour was prevalent in Sri Lanka at the time and contributed to school non-attendance, the Committee recommended changes to labour laws so that employment would not affect students' non-attendance (MOE, 2004).

The second report, the Committee of Enquiry into the Teaching of English in Ceylon Schools, recommended that the one aim of education should be for students to achieve English competency. As such, it should be compulsory up to and including Standard 8 (or year 10 in Australian schools), after which time it could be optional (MOE, 2004).

The Committee also found that English standards had fallen due to poor quality of teaching. Therefore, a second recommendation was that only specially trained teachers

be permitted to teach the subject. It also recommended establishment of a Language Research Institute to provide teachers with techniques to improve their ability to teach English. Further, to increase English competency, the Committee encouraged schools to be equipped with supplementary reading material in class libraries. They also recommended refresher courses in English teaching (MOE, 2004).

In conclusion, the most important aspect of post-independent education reforms in Sri Lanka was transference of total ownership and control of all schools to the State. This was, to a greater extent, the result of government acceptance of the Buddhist Commission Report of 1954 highlighting disadvantages of dual control of education. However, exemptions were also granted to certain denominational schools to function as independent fee-levying schools (MOE, 2004).

A 1960 report on non-school-going children dealt with enforcing a compulsory school age, particularly in rural areas, and recommended special schools for students with disabilities. In addition, this report recommended changes to child labour laws to give them the opportunity to attend school. The Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the teaching of English in Ceylon Schools of 1960 found that English standards had fallen, and emphasised the importance of improving competency by employing specially trained teachers and increasing resources such as reading material and class libraries (MOE, 2004).

4. Educational Reforms (1991)

The *National Education Commission Act, No. 19* of 1991 was enacted to align education with national aspirations. It was designed to cultivate an element of resilience and adaptability to change, a sense of security and stability in society and to propel the nation towards greater recognition in the international community (National Education Commission [NEC], 1991).

The 1991 legislation was promulgated in response to major recommendations made in the 1989 Youth Commission, which, in turn, was instigated by a bloody revolt in the southern provinces by youths frustrated at unemployment and defects in the educational system contributing to this situation. The NEC (1991) identified the major factor causing unemployment in Sri Lanka as being “the mismatch” between education

provided and workplace demands. The new legislation acknowledged this problem and instituted reform of the education system. Among other things, it did so with a view to correct defects identified by the International Labour Organisation (NEC, 1991).

An important aspect of the 1991 legislation aimed to ensure continuity in educational policies, which for the past forty years had changed with each new government. Such constant change proved disruptive to students, teachers and parents. At the same time, the legislation aimed to establish educational policies that enabled the education system to respond to changing needs in society (NEC, 1991). To achieve this, it restructured education at all levels, reforming the entire system from primary through to tertiary stages to promote individual development, but also in a way that promoted national growth. This was achieved by changes at administrative level where new policies incorporating competencies were established, and a new curriculum and teaching methods were employed (NEC, 1991).

The new policies also considered the subjective and objective nature of National Goals, and were developed into National Educational Programs in 1991. These were translated into action by various formal and informal arrangements (NEC, 1991).

The National Goals were an embodiment of values and sustainable lifestyles of Sri Lanka that aimed to ensure social justice and national cohesion. It was envisaged that these goals and policies, and the structures used to implement them, would create a springboard for better livelihood and work opportunities, and lead to self-fulfilment of the individual and nation collectively (NEC, 1991).

Thus, the 1991 legislation acknowledged the importance of the link between education and social and economic goals of society. The view was that if the continuing problem of unemployment and poverty was not corrected, there would be another uprising of social discontent similar to the one in the late 1980s (NEC, 1991).

Furthermore, to overcome added pressures on the economy as a result of an increasing population and a more complex society, the 1991 legislation incorporated greater education planning. In particular, focus was given to agricultural, technological, technical and vocational education, as it was considered these had an important impact on national plans for economic development. Hence, the desire was to produce an educated and skilled productive workforce, which in turn would provide more doctors,

paramedical personnel, agriculturists, engineers, technologists, scientists, technicians and a wide variety of other professional and skilled personnel (NEC, 1991).

5. General Education Reforms (1997)

The 1997 General Education Reforms in Sri Lanka were based on recommendations made by the National Education Commission which had been established in 1991. Implementation of the program began in 1998, with initial development of new concepts for education that were subsequently introduced to schools in 2001. However, in 2001, the National Education Commission had ended its term of responsibility and as a consequence was declared defunct (Ministry of Education [MOE], 1997).

The 1997 reforms addressed the need to improve formal education from Grades 1 to 13. Early childhood education, pre-school education, adult and continuing education and special education were also areas targeted for reform (MOE, 1997). The purpose was mainly to provide an education system to empower students with necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes, which it was envisaged would help them become productive citizens of Sri Lanka. The strategy to achieve these aims was through expansion and creation of higher education opportunities, technical education and vocational training. Improvement was also sought by increasing teaching and learning processes, administration, management and other services (First Report of The National Education Commission 1991, pp. 17–19).

Implementation of such reforms was, to a large extent, the responsibility of the managers of education. As a consequence, the new legislation sought to strengthen the administrative structure and functional framework of education and, in particular, increase human resources capacity to fulfil these additional requirements. To do this, the legislation initiated coordination between central, provincial and zonal administrations. It also established units in each major sector involved in the reform process, which came under control of a director and supported by qualified officers with delegated authority, to take necessary action for implementation (MOE, 1997).

The reform strategies addressed the pressing need at a divisional level to provide equal access to education for all students. As such, establishment of new schools also commenced at this time. In addition, fifty-four central schools originally established

between 1945 and 1947 were upgraded in terms of infrastructure, teaching and learning processes. Furthermore, in the first year of the reforms, 134 schools in different divisions were selected for improvement and upgrading. In subsequent years, remaining schools were also improved, which included upgrading around 115 schools in the much-neglected plantation areas. At the same time, primary schools in larger urban cities were also improved and made more attractive, thereby relieving pressure on more popular schools where student numbers were larger (MOE, 1997).

The 1997 reforms focused on promoting national harmony. One way this was achieved was through establishment of 'Amity Schools' in areas of multi-ethnic populations. In this way, children of different communities could study together amicably. This program of 'rehabilitation' was undertaken in schools in the North and Eastern Provinces, particularly those affected by ethnic conflict. This was done through reconstruction and refurbishment of schools ravaged by civil war, and also by offering employment incentives to teachers and administrative staff to relocate to these areas (MOE, 1997).

The legislation recognised the importance of counselling and career guidance in the general education system. This was particularly so in regard to student selection of subjects and course streams that would assist their search for suitable job placements, especially where jobs were not readily available. To achieve this goal, selected schoolteachers were given special training in career guidance and counselling. In addition, schools were instructed to build databases on the availability of vocational and technical training courses in their areas and also possible job opportunities elsewhere (MOE, 1997).

The 1997 reforms recognised the importance of Information Technology (IT) and a National Policy for including it in the school curriculum was formulated. As a result, IT began to be taught as a subject in its own right, and also used to facilitate learning in other subject areas. To achieve this reform, in 2002 and 2003 around 2000 schools were provided with computer facilities. Furthermore, eight provincial computer-training centres were established and teachers were provided with the opportunity to be trained in computer skills (MOE, 1997).

The reforms acknowledged that good teacher performance was imperative for success; to pursue teacher efficiency, a system of teacher performance appraisal (TPA) was introduced. The process involved a teacher (in consultation with his or her principal or sectional head) developing an agreed range of activities to be performed. This was to be recorded by the principal and then appraised by specialists in the Department of Education (MOE, 1997).

An important aspect of these reforms was the prominence given to gaining proficiency in foreign languages, especially English. English was acknowledged as being vital for gaining employment in the private sector – both in Sri Lanka and abroad. Furthermore, the reforms recognised English as the gateway to modern knowledge, and the medium for accessing this knowledge through IT. As a consequence, teaching English in schools became a major priority. This was done by first introducing it as the medium of instruction for teaching science subjects from May 2000, and later extending it to other subject streams (MOE, 1997).

6. Ministry of Education Report, Progress and Trends (2011)

The Sri Lankan Ministry of Education Report, ‘Progress and Trends’, was published in November 2011 to highlight the progress initiated by the 1997 General Education Reforms. It also emphasised the progress achieved, particularly in 2011, in the Mahinda Chintana National Development Program designed to promote Sri Lanka as Asia’s knowledge hub, and contained specific priorities proposed for 2012 (Progress & Recent Trends, 2011).

The Mahinda Chintana vision constitutes a development policy framework for the government of Sri Lanka, which, amongst other things, is the establishment of a system that would produce citizens equipped with abilities and technical skills needed for accelerated economic and social development (Progress & Recent Trends, 2011).

The report continues to ensure maintenance of the ideals of free education while promoting, in parallel, the quality of education. In addition, it addresses the actions taken for promoting greater inclusivity of disadvantaged groups in education (Progress & Recent Trends, 2011).

Strategies have been devised to minimise the pressure of exam-centered education by developing a school-based evaluation and a user friendly examination pattern. This has been supported by designing curriculums suitable for various student ages and mental capabilities which would make them better equipped for employment (Progress & Recent Trends, 2011).

A centre for the professional development of principals and officers of the Education Administrative Services of Sri Lanka has also been established with the assistance of the United Nations Education and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) (Progress & Recent Trends, 2011).

The Progress and Trends Report addresses the progress achieved in teaching and learning English in Sri Lanka in 2011, and describes the establishment of an English Centre and a further three Centres of Excellence for the teaching and learning of English. It notes that progress has also been made to implement the 'English as a Life Skill' program (Progress & Recent Trends, 2011).

Conclusion

The 1997 Education Reforms adopted new education concepts aimed at improving all sectors of education to create better opportunities and conditions for Sri Lankans to be productive citizens. This was achieved by improving efficiency of teaching and learning, and strengthening the structure and functions of administration, management and ancillary services. These reforms aimed to provide equal access to education through a program of establishing new schools and upgrading others. The reform actively supported national harmony by establishing 'Amity Schools'. It also undertook a program of 'rehabilitation' of schools in war-ravaged areas of the country.

Career guidance and counselling in schools were also an important part of these reforms. This was supported by providing teacher training and creation of databases for information on job availability and training. The importance of Information Technology (IT) was also recognised, and was included in the curriculum as a discrete subject, supported by provision of teaching and computer facilities. The system of Teacher Performance Approval was introduced to maintain teacher efficiency, which was believed to be crucial to success. These reforms also recognised the importance of

learning foreign languages, particularly English, which was seen as the lynchpin for modern knowledge and for accessing IT. As a result, the teaching of English in schools became a priority.

More importantly, the Education Reforms of 1997 were a major departure from those undertaken previously, as they involved a change of Sri Lanka's entire education system.

Finally, the Progress and Recent Trends Report of November 2011 which followed the Education Reforms of 1997, provides an indication that Sri Lanka appears to be making progress in the field of education.

CHAPTER 3: GLOBALISATION AND EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

Introduction

‘Globalisation’ is communication that occurs universally for the purpose of economic and business activity. It entails sharing information and applying knowledge-based information in an efficient manner (Castells, cited in Punchi, 2001). Establishing global communication gives access to knowledge-based information. In this way, global communication can be used as a means of achieving higher standards of education, particularly in less developed countries, which in turn provide new resources that enhance learning (Castells, cited in Punchi, 2001).

Related to this is the concept of ‘globalisation of education’, which is the participation in education that occurs through access to knowledge-based information. Globalisation of education provides young people with the tools they need to cope with the world around them and to embrace the change encountered in this. It includes an appreciation of the complexity involved, the need for conflict management, the inevitability of change, and the interconnectedness amongst humans within their environment. Therefore, such learning empowers students to shape their future and to help them counter feelings of powerlessness. It is suggested that globalisation of education prepares globally competent citizens. Furthermore, that globalisation of education affects the society of the future (Castells, cited in Punchi, 2001).

The author asserts that students should become globally literate to enable them to compete internationally, particularly in the workforce of the future. This will necessarily require them to be more efficient and effective in the use of modern technology.

Brock-Utne (cited in Punchi, 2001) states that there are constant changes as a consequence of globalisation, including those of a political and economic nature. These changes in turn prompt new strategies and approaches that impact on global educational needs, which in turn affect the structure, function, curriculum and approach of both formal and informal education at all levels, and especially at tertiary level: for example, development of systems such as the World Wide Web (www) has been the vehicle for

exploring and utilising current global knowledge within a range of new industries, contributing to advances in biotechnology, science (including computer science) and information technology. Furthermore, it has also changed society's approach to informal learning and has helped adult learners, disadvantaged people in society and remote communities engage in lifelong learning (Brock-Utne, cited in Punchi, 2001).

These new systems of learning are a quick and efficient method of accessing global knowledge, and in so doing provide exposure to the latest technological developments which may, in turn, lead to economic prosperity. Unfortunately, many developing nations lack access to such systems, and, as a result, are further disadvantaged educationally, socially and economically (Brock-Utne, cited in Punchi, 2001).

Carnoy (cited in Punchi, 2001) states that Sri Lanka, as a developing nation, has until recent years experienced similar disadvantage. This fact was borne out during the recent tsunami relief operation there in 2005, when modern medical technology used by overseas relief teams could not be operated by local medical staff due to their unfamiliarity with it. Events of this nature highlight the urgent need to identify the problems and to search for strategies to enable efficient access to global knowledge. Often, the problem may relate to the high cost of installing efficient communication technology (cited in Punchi, 2001).

In addition, use of local languages in Sri Lanka as the medium for most, if not all, communication, limits the population's access to global knowledge. This is because English is the universal language of global communication (Phillipson, 1999, p. 66), and, therefore, essential to the globalisation of education itself. Thus, it can be seen that while English plays a pivotal role in the advancement of developing countries, it is still the second or foreign language in countries like Sri Lanka.

In searching for strategies to educate Sri Lankans about advances in modern technology, the Sri Lankan government has realised the need to enhance access to global knowledge. To do so, it also concedes that primarily, the standard of English in the country needs to be improved. It has acknowledged that lack of competency in English has hindered the country from participating fully in global communication, and in turn, in global education. To address these needs, the government has developed a policy to

reintroduce the English language into the education system (General Education Reforms, 1997).

English was initially reintroduced in 2003 as a compulsory curriculum subject at primary and secondary school levels. As discussed in Chapter 2, it was previously omitted from the curriculum because of educational reform supporting the importance of national languages. The current long-term plan is for gradual adoption of English in Sri Lanka as a medium of instruction from primary through to tertiary levels.

The introduction of English as a medium of instruction is one of many tasks required to reconstruct educational institutions and systems to improve education standards in Sri Lanka. In addition to facing this formidable challenge, Sri Lanka must actively reshape its educational systems in ways that are consistent with its national priorities (Mansell & When, cited in Punchi, 2001). However, balanced with this is the need to take into consideration the fundamental changes occurring because of the global economy.

To achieve such changes, Sri Lanka has faced very high costs that it cannot meet. As a result, it has had to look to international agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank for assistance (Ministry of Education, 2002). Fortunately, in response to appeals, such agencies have indicated their willingness to provide Sri Lanka with funds to develop its education program (Carnoy, cited in Punchi, 2001). For example, a recent program sponsored by the World Bank for educational development in Sri Lanka was designed to produce higher calibre graduates to improve quality of the workforce. This project was entitled 'Improving Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education Project' (IRQUE) and based in Colombo (World Bank Group (Tertiary Education Reforms), 2003). The author observed that although the IRQUE project offered grants to strengthen public universities, the way it was implemented has unfortunately meant that only English-educated graduates from elite English-speaking groups in Sri Lanka benefited from it.

Implications of Funding from International Agencies

International agencies that provide aid to developing countries obtain their capital from private enterprise in developed countries. This capital funding is then provided as low interest loans to recipient countries to finance their development programs.

Governments of recipient countries often administer development programs themselves, or make the funds available to local entrepreneurs who are then responsible for loan and interest repayments to international agencies. Such programs, therefore, need to be cost-effective and necessarily profit-driven (Carnoy, cited in Punchi, 2001). It could be argued that those who lend capital to developing countries for educational programs do so with the sole motive of seeking a return on their investment. They are, in fact, devoid of any altruistic sense so often attributed to them.

Traditionally, health and education have been treated as social commodities. In the global economy, however, they are no longer viewed this way, but have instead been replaced with user-pay systems. According to Brock-Utne (cited in Punchi, 2001), under this new global economy “education is not viewed as a right, a joy, a tool for liberation and empowerment, but as an investment”. Thus, as Carnoy (cited in Punchi, 2001) also indicates, globalisation may have a major impact on education, but its effect on education and production of knowledge are largely a product of that finance-driven free market ideology, and not simply a means to improve education. This is reiterated in the attitude of international agencies with regard to providing funds for education (Burnett & Patrinos, cited in Punchi, 2001).

Entrepreneurs in developing countries such as Sri Lanka are always eager to seize investment opportunities requiring capital availability. They view educational development as a business opportunity, and as a consequence, provide services that generate a return on their investment. To do so, they are compelled to levy fees. In Sri Lanka, however, the concept of levying education fees is contrary to the free education policy enjoyed by many for over fifty years (Jayasuriya, 2000, p. 52). Free education was introduced to maintain equity across society and provide the opportunity for education to every student in Sri Lanka, regardless of socio-economic level, religion or cultural background.

The majority of the population in Sri Lanka belongs to the lower socio-economic level of society and therefore cannot afford education fees. Therefore, in a profit-driven global economy, nations such as Sri Lanka seeking to reform education systems to fully participate internationally, face the dilemma of reconciling the existing free education policy with the need to introduce school fees (Jayasuriya, 2000, p. 52).

This dilemma occurs in an environment where the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, amongst the most powerful ‘globalisers’, are driven by the ideology of profit. As such, they persuade borrowing countries to make educational reforms that include decentralisation and privatisation without consideration for what the ramification of such reforms may have on ‘education’ or ‘development’ itself. This is especially the case in the context of Sri Lanka (Carnoy, cited in Punchi 2001). Therefore, simply obtaining funds from international agencies is not always the panacea for the malaise in education programs common in developing countries such as Sri Lanka.

Overall, it would seem that international agencies do not understand the problems faced in reforming Sri Lanka’s education system, including the time and processes required to provide an enduring solution. Their focus on short-term programs, some of which have merit, do not address the more urgent and larger problem – namely, the effective and efficient strategy to teach English to allow Sri Lankans to participate in global education in the shortest time.

Given the current funding situation, a further dilemma is posed. Funding a quality English education through a fee-paying private system would benefit a much smaller population in the short term, and speed Sri Lanka’s entry into global communication. Alternatively, considering longer term options of a slower pace, requiring a long and detailed process, might achieve a more equitable solution for all. It is also possible that a combination of both propositions may be the answer. In any event, it is clear that English is important for educational advancement (Crystal, cited in Punchi, 2001).

The author has lived in Sri Lanka and is conversant with local conditions and the general lack of infrastructure planning. He therefore has serious reservations regarding the reintroduction of English into its education system. Furthermore, because of the lapse of fifty years, the author considers any change in the process should be trialled in the first instance, and believes that thereafter, the entire process be carefully orchestrated. Consideration needs to be given to the large number of schools in Sri Lanka and the magnitude of the student population. Therefore, bringing about change of this nature in education presents a major logistical challenge.

The author further observes that in light of his knowledge of the cultural and religious diversity of the Sri Lankan student population, any educational change faces serious obstacles. This has been exacerbated because of ongoing ethnic and religious conflict in the country. Political interference has had a major impact on the distribution of resources and teacher placements in remote regions; such distribution has been to a large degree in the control of power-wielding politicians. In essence, the reintroduction of English may be successful in certain regions, while others may be deprived of the benefits of this educational reform or receive it much later because of political expediency.

The author is also keenly aware of the socio-economic mix and the distinct class disparity that exists in Sri Lankan society and therefore cautions that any change to the Sri Lankan education system also requires careful consideration of students' socio-economic circumstances. Currently, many students from poor families in cities and villages are unable to remain in school past junior grades because they are forced into work to support the family income. The result of this is that they usually find employment in unskilled jobs. In contrast, students completing secondary education find semi-skilled work in shops and factories. A lesser number of students from more affluent families are fortunate enough to complete tertiary studies and therefore able to seek skilled employment.

Bandarage (1998) states that despite the labour market value placed on achieving high levels of education, those obtaining tertiary degrees in the vernacular have to compete for limited jobs as clerks in government offices and small business at local level. He argues that the value of obtaining a high level of education is further diminished by the fact that such jobs require only knowledge of local languages, which presents something of a conundrum for authorities. The reason for this is that given the national and global push for English and use of English as the medium of instruction for schools in Sri Lanka, government departments and local businesses continue to demand knowledge of local languages as a prerequisite for employment (Bandarage, cited in Punchi, 2001).

Bandarage asserts that there are limited employment opportunities in the corporate sector and higher government positions for Sri Lankans where competency in English is required. As such, these positions are currently only available to students who have received private education where English was used as the medium of instruction. The

expanding private sector, especially foreign banks and foreign-owned commercial enterprises, prefer to hire English-speaking youth from wealthy urban classes (Bandarage, cited in Punchi, 2001).

The author notes that explanations provided by Bandarage in the two previous paragraphs provide evidence that competency in English leads to upward social mobility. Consequently, this has over the years created two distinct classes in Sri Lankan society: those competent in English who attract higher paid employment, and those without such ability who have limited earning capacities. Thus, it would appear that the reintroduction of English as a means of upgrading education and participation in globalisation would benefit the nation as a whole, but would indirectly impact upon the socio-economic balance of the people in Sri Lanka in the short-term. It is an inevitable dilemma that needs to be accepted for the greater good of the country.

The author cautions that the difficulty for many developing countries is that programs used by international agencies are produced in Western countries, where problems of language and socio-economic disparity are not crucial issues. Program developers are not familiar with problems that exist in countries such as Sri Lanka, and may not understand or be cognisant of the potential for restricted participation, which can in turn create discrimination.

In summary, the complex social, political and economic diversity of Sri Lanka has resulted in difficulties with the introduction of English and the implementation of programs designed to upgrade the standard of education. At the same time, the need for change is fundamental if Sri Lanka is to participate in the globalisation of education and in the global economy more generally.

Impact of Globalisation on Education Reforms

Martin Carnoy in 'Globalization and Educational Restructuring' (cited in Punchi, 2001) discusses the impact of globalisation on educational reforms in Sri Lanka, and argues that the process of globalisation in nation-states results in three types of educational reforms: competitiveness-driven reforms, finance-driven reforms and equity-driven reforms (cited in Punchi, 2001). In addition, the author notes that there are also language-driven reforms.

Carnoy explains that reforms driven by competition are productivity-based. He states that there are two major educational projects in Sri Lanka that belong to this category. They are the Secondary Education Modernisation Project (SEMP) and the Secondary General Education Project (SGEP), funded by the Asian development Bank and the World Bank respectively. The SEMP scope aims at enhancing quality, access and quality in teaching, availability of material and providing access to all students. The SGEP also has similar goals, but extends it to managing educational programs to respond to the economic need of the country (cited in Punchi, 2001).

According to Carnoy, finance-driven reform is the strategy to reduce public spending on education by introducing public-private partnerships in education to make secondary and tertiary education more competitive for the future. He cautions that Sri Lanka will be vulnerable to the effects of globalisation if it relies on funding by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank (cited in Punchi, 2001).

Equity-driven reforms, as explained by Carnoy, aim to shift public resources from higher to primary education levels to improve quality and access to education for lower socio-economic groups (cited in Punchi, 2001).

The author argues that although free education was introduced in Sri Lanka in 1945 for all students from Grade 1 to university level, quality of and access to education has arguably declined over the years because of the lack of funding and political instability in the country.

Carnoy contends that finance-driven reforms tend to drive away equity-driven reforms in most developed and developing countries because such reforms dominate educational change in the globalised economy (cited in Punchi, 2001).

After independence from colonial rule, Sri Lanka was able to resist the dominance of English and introduce vernacular languages of Sinhala and Tamil as mediums of instruction. However, the prestige of English continued to discriminate against those educated in vernacular languages. The argument against the use of Sinhala is that it is used only in Sri Lanka, and is therefore of little significance as a medium of instruction (cited in Punchi, 2001).

The author states that use of local languages in education in Sri Lanka is dependent upon translations from original English texts. Translation from English to Sri Lankan vernacular languages is arduous and time-consuming and often requires coining of new local words to give accurate meaning to the original text. This requires reference to Pali and Sanskrit glossaries, as these languages are derivatives of Sinhala and Tamil. On the other hand, using these languages as mediums of instruction means that secondary and higher education are within the reach of common masses in the country.

Fee-levying international schools with English as the medium of instruction have been established in Sri Lanka in the 1970s. In fact, the author has observed that employers in Sri Lanka still prefer students from international schools to those from State schools because of their higher competency in English. English has also been reintroduced from May 2002 as an optional medium of instruction to students taking science subjects at upper secondary level (General Education Reforms, 1997).

Language-driven Reforms

In addition to the three types of education reforms envisaged by Carnoy cited above, it is not difficult to predict yet another reform that may arise from globalisation: the emerging dominance of English as the medium of instruction.

Many African educationists have complained that the World Bank does not promote teaching in vernacular languages beyond primary level, and that it makes absolutely no mention of teaching these languages at tertiary level in African countries. Currently, more English medium courses are being introduced in Chinese universities. More private business schools are being established in Sri Lanka which offer courses in English, securing more employment in countries all over the world. If globalisation means integrating and organising economic activities across national boundaries to connect business communities across the world in real time, a powerful global language to communicate in is also required. English seems to have acquired status as the most dominant global language today (Punchi, 2001, p. 372).

Robert Phillipson in the article ‘The Globalization of Dominant Languages’ says:

At the heart of all education is language policy. English is at the heart of contemporary globalisation processes, a dominant language. It is quite possible that the forces behind globalisation would prefer the world to be monolingual. To those who see the world in exclusively economic terms, the transnational corporations and banks, this might represent rationalization. (cited in Punchi, 2001, p. 372)

Although Phillipson personally does not believe in a “monolingual reductionism” (Punchi, 2001, pp. 373–374) as a result of globalisation, it is what the globalisers are deliberately persuading us to accept. Therefore, the implication of the above statement could be examined by studying ongoing processes in relation to language policy in some South-East Asian countries. This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

While English continued to be the dominant language in some former British colonies in Africa even after independence, countries such as Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan were able to resist English and introduce native languages as mediums of instruction (Punchi, 2000, p. 375). It could be argued that there was a justification for doing so at that time, because those languages were suppressed during colonial rule. The author has discussed the post-colonial situation in Sri Lanka at length in Chapter 2.

The author notes that in post-colonial Sri Lanka, the spirit of nationalism was strong, stripping the nation of vestiges of British rule to gain a national identity. Introducing Sinhala (or *swabasha*, meaning ‘our own language’) as the State language with reasonable use of Tamil (a concession to the ethnic Tamil minority) was not unusual for a former colony (according to the terms of the *Official Language Act 1959*). He adds that India made a similar change when it replaced English with Hindi as the State language. At the time these changes took place, implications of globalisation were not a major concern. What mattered most was restoration of national identity.

In hindsight, however, Sri Lanka and the former colonies have realised the importance of English in their need to belong to the globalisation of knowledge, and in particular, education, and have introduced strategies to reintroduce English into their educational systems.

The author believes that it is unusual for a country’s language policy in education to be determined by globalisers. However, as Phillipson states, if globalisers select English as a monolingual policy because of its pre-eminence, any country that wishes to communicate on a global level is also compelled to make English pre-eminent in its language policy (cited in Punchi, 2001). This issue is discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

The author concedes that the transformation from English to national languages in Sri Lanka in the 1950s has been a major leap forward in the revival of those languages, and it is hoped that this impetus will not be lost in the process of reintroducing English into the education system. The importance of English as the lynchpin in the globalisation of education must not dilute the importance of maintaining local languages as lynchpins of national identity and national unity.

The author explains that in Sri Lanka, Sinhala was spoken and understood by most of the population except a small percentage of Tamils. After independence in 1948, it was not only a feeling of national pride, but arguably a logical decision to introduce the vernacular languages of Sinhala and Tamil as mediums of instruction in schools. Nevertheless, the prestige of English continued to discriminate against the vernacularly educated (Punchi, 2001, p. 373). The prestige of English referred to by Punchi was a status symbol of upper class society, and merely a remnant of the British Raj. It was also an advantage for employment in commerce and management, because technical and management information was still written in English, despite the fact that competency in Sinhala was compulsory for administration in government departments and commerce. Competency in Sinhala, however, did not assist employees to read, comprehend and disseminate information from documents written in English (Punchi, 2001, pp. 374–75).

Altbach (2004) elaborates on the importance of English when he states that “English is the Latin of the twenty-first century” (p. 6). In the current period, use of English is central for sharing knowledge worldwide, for instruction in countries where it is not the language of higher education and for degree and other study programs across the board. The dominance of English is not surprising and it is a factor in globalisation that deserves analysis – if only for the fact that higher education worldwide must grapple with its major role (Altbach, 2004, p. 6).

Punchi (2001) comments that the economic liberalisation that took place after 1977 in Sri Lanka led to the establishment of fee-levying international schools with English as the medium of instruction. These schools prepared students for examinations conducted by the University of London and continue to do so. As a result, Punchi adds, the students from these schools are preferred by private sector employers (as opposed to

those in State schools who are vernacularly educated), as they are thought to be fluent in English – the dominant language of globalisation (2001, p. 373).

Nevertheless, even after four decades, the prestige of English continued to discriminate against the vernacularly educated. From May 2002, English has become an optional medium of instruction for science students at upper secondary level; however, the process of assimilation has been slow. There has been much opposition from the leftist coalition party of the present government, which claims that supporting traditional agricultural industry is a far more profitable investment towards self-sufficiency than indebtedness to international monetary agencies that exploit education as an investment (Punchi, 2001, p. 374).

According to Punchi in his article ‘Resistance Towards the Language of Globalisation – The Case of Sri Lanka’ (2001), the language barrier has kept the great majority of students out of “information” with the world (p. 374).

The author argues that it would be preferable for a few Sri Lankans to take advantage of the shift to English to allow benefits to the country, rather than abandoning the change altogether. This risk may have to be taken, or the nation could be further isolated from global integration. The dilemma is balancing the need to maintain social equity with maintaining the impetus of progress in globalisation.

Punchi further explains this dilemma when he states that Sri Lankan academics who have adhered to English as the major medium in education have argued that teaching in vernacular languages has led to a decline in English standards of the people. Furthermore, they have vehemently argued that English is the only key that will open the door for information in the world – invariably concluding their argument by adding that Sinhala is used only in Sri Lanka and is therefore of little significance as a medium of instruction (Tamil is also used by fifty-five million people in Tamil Nadu in India). They also argue that the quality of translated works is dubious, as good translations into Sinhala are hard to find. In such a context, these pro-English ‘educationists’ seem to hail the idea of reintroducing English as the mode of instruction at secondary school level. They also claim that a common international language such as English used as a medium of instruction will bring about harmony and understanding among major ethnic groups in Sri Lanka (Punchi, 2001, p. 374).

On the opposite viewpoint, Punchi continues to expand on the views of those supporting reintroduction of English as the common medium and the only way to global knowledge in Sri Lanka. He states that it can be easily challenged by the examples of other countries. Norway, for example, requires Norwegian at every level in society, including education. In fact, proficiency in Norwegian is a prerequisite for securing a job in the public as well as private sector. There are other examples as well, Japan, Finland, Mongolia, South Korea and Indonesia. By contrast, Sri Lanka is moving to the stage where proficiency in vernacular languages will actually *disqualify* employment, especially in the private sector. However, it must be noted that Norway is an economically stable country with significant input into the global economy, while Sri Lanka does not enjoy the same status (Punchi, 2001, p. 380).

The author suggests that a compromise could have been made to continue English in Sri Lanka in the 1960s, but it was clearly not politically expedient at the time to do so when the fervour of nationalism was strong and relentless.

The author has not found any research that had been done in Sri Lanka before the local languages became the mediums of instruction. He is of the opinion that politicians in Sri Lanka did not think it was relevant, or were possibly fearful that any research might reveal that their actions were overly hasty.

Punchi (2001) explains that countries that use “small languages” (languages restricted to a few people) may be tempted to change the primary medium at their universities entirely to English. He refers to a debate which took place in the Netherlands on this topic, where it was decided to keep Dutch as the main language of instruction largely out of concern for the long-term survival of the Dutch language, although degree programs in English are still flourishing there (p. 376).

The author draws attention to the futility of attempting to retain two languages, with each serving a different purpose. He notes that in Sri Lanka, vernacular languages have been in use for almost fifty years, which in turn has meant that terminology difficulties were encountered in teaching various subjects from humanities to the sciences, especially at upper levels. Nonetheless, this has had the positive effect of making secondary and higher education within reach of more students.

However, the author emphasises that since current knowledge changes and increases so rapidly, any advances, particularly in science and technology (which are written mainly in English) have to be translated into Sinhala or Tamil. This takes time. As knowledge advances, the further delay will result in a continuous backlog of material needing translation. This process is tedious and time-consuming, particularly when new terms need to be coined to convey the meaning of the English definition. Furthermore, since both Sinhala and Tamil are derived from the classical languages of Pali and Sanskrit, the delay is even greater as new words are built from derivatives. The fact that students are compelled to wait for availability of translated material means that Sri Lanka will be continually held back in the global knowledge race.

Conclusion

Discussion in this chapter has centered on the fact that education in the global economy requires that nations of the world interact to exchange knowledge-based information to remain competitive and productive. English is the preferred language for communication and participation of knowledge-based global information. Poor communication deprives a nation of the ability to remain competitive and productive.

This chapter has shown that Sri Lanka has realised it must improve its standards of competitiveness and productivity by communicating and participating in knowledge-based education, but that this has unfortunately been set back in the country due to political unrest, an economic downturn, ethnic warfare, and the more recent tsunami of December 2004.

It has been argued that the main problem faced by Sri Lanka not engaging in the globalisation of education is the lack of competency in English of many Sri Lankans.

It has been emphasised that Sri Lanka's inability to communicate effectively in the preferred global language of English is because of its education policy since the 1940s to abolish English as a medium of instruction and compulsory second language. This has been the rule from primary to university levels. It has been explained that this policy was introduced to restore national integrity in Sri Lanka after 450 years of foreign domination. It has been argued that in retrospect, politicians and educationists have admitted that the policy has isolated Sri Lanka from global knowledge and education,

and that new policies have been drafted to reintroduce English as a medium of instruction and compulsory second language.

There has been a brief description of the history of educational reform in Sri Lanka, emphasising the introduction of the Free Education Bill of 1945 that aimed to give all students the opportunity for educational advancement. It has been argued that this Bill did not ensure a better and more equitable form of education – since private schools and universities with English as the teaching medium were the domain of the rich, and State schools using vernacular languages were for poorer classes. It has been shown that this has led to inequity of opportunity in education and employment, and clearly traceable to the British colonial education system.

This chapter has further shown that the education system in Sri Lanka has deteriorated in the past forty years for all the reasons mentioned above. As Sri Lanka lacks both the expertise and funds to correct this situation, it is turning to international monetary agencies for help. It has been argued that while these agencies are eager to help, Sri Lanka must be aware of the size and nature of indebtedness and the conditions attached to such funding.

International monetary agencies view education as a commodity and therefore seek a return on their investment by the establishment of fee-levying private schools and universities that aim to produce better quality education. It has been argued that this strategy would only provide the opportunity for wealthier classes to educate their children in better quality private educational institutions because they are able to afford the fees. The poorer classes must necessarily be compelled to continue in schools of lower quality. It then follows that the educational reforms necessary to meet globalisation needs will, in effect, only benefit the rich – both in education and employment opportunities – thus causing wider disparity in the structure of Sri Lankan society.

In order to make benefits accessible to all students regardless of class, a process of granting scholarships or entry by way of independent external examinations needs to be considered. In this situation, there needs to be strict non-interference from local organisations. A standard test by an independent organisation, similar to the University Medical Aptitude Test (UMAT) held in Australia, needs to be considered.

Quality versus equality should not be treated as a dilemma but as a challenge. Sri Lanka is capable of challenges. It has survived the massive tsunami disaster of 2004 and is regaining normality. Globalisation of educational reform is inevitable. All it needs is opportunity, time and effort.

CHAPTER 4: SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN SRI LANKA

Introduction

As already mentioned, the author is a Sri Lankan expatriate. He has observed whilst resident in Sri Lanka that curriculum from 1940 to the mid-1960s was a repetition of the same syllabus, often with use of the same textbooks, and was even taught by the same teachers! The syllabus, as it was known during that period, was determined and distributed by the Department of Education to schools, with little or no change from previous years. Since the syllabus for the most part was unchanged, the result was that booklists remained the same for successive years. The benefit for students was that they could always use the books of their older siblings or borrow books from friends and return them at the end of the school year.

The author recalls, as a secondary school student in Sri Lanka, that there was a culture of treating books with respect and care, and to protect them by brown paper covers. Hence brown paper was an item on the textbooks and stationery list. As a result of the repetitious nature of the syllabus, teachers knew their texts and could deliver them verbatim. They could verbalise content with confidence and panache, and deliver a lesson with no lesson plan or texts before them to a class of mesmerised students. The education system in that period was based on the British system. Furthermore, textbooks used in Sri Lanka were the same as those used in British schools. There was little or no reflection regarding their relevance or whether they would benefit Sri Lankan students for the future. There would, however, be a marked difference in the curriculums of the years that were to follow.

The author notes that a significant change in policy and direction commenced around 1961, when the Department of Education of Sri Lanka appointed a committee to work full-time on curriculum development. As a result of their findings and recommendations, the Department of Education established the Curriculum Development Centre in 1968, which was responsible for curriculum development for the next thirty years (Ariyadasa, Ahmed, Peiris, Perera & Ranaweera, 1977).

Curriculum and In-Service Education before 1968

A brief history of curriculum in Sri Lanka was prepared for the Asian Centre of Educational Innovation for Development (ACEID) of Sri Lanka from 1967 to 1968, in association with the following members of the Sri Lankan Ministry of Education:

- Mr K.D. Ariyadasa, Deputy Director General of Education;
- Mr M.U. Ahmed, Director of Education;
- Miss T.K.J. Peiris, Director of Education;
- Mr D A. Perera , Director of Education; and
- Mr A.M. Ranaweera, Director of Education.

(Ariyadasa et al., 1977)

The ACEID states that curriculum development is a movement based on corporate planning and corporate action in education, and “implies a fundamental recasting of the educational process as a whole and not just a spring cleaning of existing school syllabuses and revamping methods of teaching” (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

According to the ACEID, development of the curriculum can be the outcome of *ad hoc* decisions. However, such ‘development’ over the years, through the accretion of bits and pieces, does not reflect the history of curriculum development as a movement. Hence, an attempt will be made here to scan the educational history in Sri Lanka of the past one hundred years or more with a view to highlighting those endeavours and activities that accord, however remotely, with the concept of curriculum development as it is understood by educators today (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The ACEID asserts that organised in-service education must be distinguished from random parleys attended by professionals and teachers. It has to be viewed as a purposeful activity conducted on a continuing basis, geared to the achievement of educational objectives, and to the professional growth of teachers (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The ACEID explains that from about 1869 to about 1942, the educational system in Sri Lanka reflected unashamedly the social stratification and the intents and purposes of the

colonial rulers. The ‘vernacular’ schools intended for the masses counted for nothing and merely provided from the beginning of this period an education in the ‘three Rs’ and little besides. The English-medium high schools and colleges based their curriculum on British public and grammar school models. It could not be otherwise, since these schools prepared their pupils for the Cambridge and the London University examinations. The practice of a foreign country dictating the examination curriculum of Sri Lankan secondary schools continued right into the fifth decade of the twentieth century (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

Curriculum Development Centre (1968)

The ACEID asserts that changes in the Sri Lankan school curriculum from 1968 came about on the recommendations of committees and sub-committees, and at times on recommendations of colonial governors themselves. Sometimes these committees were assisted by the British Monarch’s own inspectors from England. Introduction of national languages into the curriculum of English schools in Sri Lanka, introduction of agriculture and crafts into vernacular schools and commercial subjects into upper grades of English schools and such other piecemeal decisions were taken from time to time. The curriculum of English and vernacular schools in Sri Lanka “developed with the passage of time” (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The ACEID states that there are two educational advancements of this period that merit inclusion in this brief survey of curriculum development. The first is the inauguration of what is generally known as the ‘Handessa Scheme’ or the rural scheme of education. The experiment was conducted in 1931 in a vernacular school in the village of Handessa, hence the name. It appeared to be a well-planned move to give to children of rural schools an education that was socially and vocationally relevant. It was activity-based and was an earnest attempt at practical education (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The ACEID describes the curriculum of the Handessa Scheme as follows:

The traditional compartmentalisation of the curriculum into subjects would be a hindrance in the correlation and integration of information around tasks. Therefore, the normal school subjects were replaced by work tasks under four headings. The whole syllabus consisted of two years’ work. The titles of the tasks were as follows:

- a) Health, which included personal hygiene health and sanitation of the school and the locality. Some of the tasks done under this topic were: construction of lavatories, testing the water supply of the neighborhood, oiling and disinfecting the breeding places of mosquitoes, building bunds round wells to prevent surface pollution, health games, first aid, etc.
- b) Study of the locality. Under this topic the history and geography of the area were studied. Maps and charts were prepared, showing the variety of crops grown, the areas of land under cultivation, rainfall of the locality, etc.;
- c) Occupations. Under this topic, the following types of work were carried out:
 - i) Agriculture – rice, vegetables and fruit production;
 - ii) Maintenance, repairs, and colour washing of school buildings (painting with lake lime);
 - iii) Handicrafts, carpentry, and repairs of school furniture and the making of articles useful for the school;
 - iv) Hand Work – Coir work, cane work, toy making, etc.;
- d) Aesthetic studies, which included music, art, dancing and literature.

(Ariyadasa et al., 1977)

Continuing its description, the ACEID adds that the Handessa Scheme spread rapidly to 246 government schools, and seven assisted vernacular schools. Four teacher training colleges were opened to train teachers in the new curriculum. The scheme was meant for boys in the vernacular schools above the Eighth Standard and did not include girls. As a result, it was admitted that this omission was a weakness in the scheme (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The ACEID admits that the planning, organising and implementation of the Handessa Scheme needs to be acknowledged as a successful curriculum development effort – primarily because it belonged to the 1930s, when any form of educational advancement was discouraged, and particularly if it related to rural areas, which past governments considered to be best left alone (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The other educational advancement referred to in the Survey of Curriculum Development is the publication of ‘The Scheme of Studies and Syllabuses for Schools’ in December 1928. The Scheme of Studies specified the subjects to be taught in each grade from kindergarten to Grade 8, and provided guidance to teachers on the scope of the subject and its application (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The period after 1943 has been greatly influenced by the recommendations made in the report of the Special Committee on Education published in 1945. It has been said of this report that it is “the result of the only complete and comprehensive investigation of all aspects of education undertaken during the hundred and fifty years of British rule in Ceylon”, which makes it of significant importance to education (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The ACEID elaborates that the most important change impacting on the curriculum as a result of the Special Committee recommendations was changing the medium of instruction from English to local languages. This meant that Sinhala and Tamil replaced English as the mediums of instruction starting from Grade 1 in 1945 and progressing to Grade 10 for most schools by 1954. In 1957, the mediums of instruction for subjects taught in all schools were Sinhala and Tamil. This policy was thereafter extended to senior secondary and university levels. The use of Sinhala and Tamil as mediums of instruction has had a great impact on Sri Lanka’s education system at all levels (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The ACEID states that a further innovation that occurred during this period was the teaching of handicrafts in schools. This had received a new boost. In place of the variety of handicrafts previously taught rather indifferently, a few subjects like woodwork, metalwork, weaving and ceramics were singled out, and a project was begun to ensure their successful teaching (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

In pursuit of the handicrafts program, the ACEID explains that it had to obtain both equipment and services of overseas specialists; in addition, new workshops were designed and built and detailed syllabuses and work schemes were drawn up. Handicrafts were also recognised as subjects for public examinations. In order to facilitate learning, specialist courses in teacher training were instituted and the status of teachers trained in secondary education was given to those taking these courses. There were also specialist inspectors appointed to supervise these courses (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

Another aspect of curriculum change was the impetus given to the teaching of aesthetic subjects. Art, indigenous music and dancing received encouragement. This was partly due to the upsurge of nationalism in Sri Lanka that demanded a revival of national culture and art forms (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

While the ACEID authors state that examinations continued to determine curriculum, the author adds that it was because the curriculum was not competency-based and had no overarching outcomes based philosophy. As in the earlier period, ministry officials led the way in curriculum activities. There is no evidence to indicate that there was any institutionalised framework within which curriculum activities were undertaken.

The ACEID states that the beginning of organised in-service training can be traced to the early 1960s, with importance placed on teaching English. Surprisingly, it says that from being the first language for the few in socially elite schools, it had become the second language for all students from Grade 3. It admits that as a result of the lack of competent teachers, English was not taught in all schools. It emphasises that regardless of these problems, there was still a demand for English, as it was still seen as a status symbol and the vehicle to advance to elite job opportunities. This resulted in the implementation of a widespread program of in-service training of English teachers (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The ACEID explains that the implementation program was a significant success, resulting in the establishment of a permanent organisational structure to administer and operate in-service training on a continuing basis for all teachers. As the demand for training persisted, weekend and vacation-time refresher courses were organised by the Inspector of Schools with the assistance of knowledgeable ministry officials and teacher educators. As a consequence of the high level of interest and participation, all-island courses were broadcast over the national radio stations, with organised follow-up activities (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The early 1950s witnessed the beginning of the curriculum processes in Sri Lanka being understood and utilised in curriculum development. There was substantial evidence of fine-tuning of the curriculum, particularly with the new awareness that short-term, piecemeal changes were both inadequate and inappropriate to solve problems in curriculum (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The ACEID addressed the need to change the curriculum by regrouping subjects in terms of children's needs and interests, or in terms of the nature of knowledge based on the educational thinking prevalent at that time. The initiative for this came from the Ministry of Education itself, and since all its fiats went under the hand of the Director of

Education, it was difficult at the time to discover to what extent teachers and teacher educators were involved in the process that led to curriculum change (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

Curriculum change occurred in 1956, and was seen as an important departure from the mechanistic disciplinary approach that characterised primary education. The grouping of subjects other than religion, ‘mother tongue’ (parental language most used at home) and ‘number’ (elementary arithmetic) in the primary curriculum came under:

- physical and aesthetic activities;
- constructional activities; and
- environmental activities.

(Ariyadasa et al., 1977)

Another curriculum change that occurred around the same time was the drafting and implementation of a coordinated general science syllabus for junior secondary school, and the running of in-service (‘on-the-job’ training’) courses. These were also important landmarks in the history of curriculum development in Sri Lanka (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The ACEID explains that the writing of textbooks constitutes an important part of the curriculum process. The year 1879 stands out in the history of textbook production as the year in which the Department of Education embarked on the production of textbooks. It was the lack of books and, more importantly, it was the lack of good books in the swabasha schools and in the swabasha stream of the Anglo-swabasha schools, which made the Department enter the field of textbook production. The authors of the books were drawn from a wide circle. The departmental directors, together with inspectors, translators and scholars from outside the Department, contributed their share to the success of the movement (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The movement which started in 1879 had significant problems; however, it survived a Committee of Inquiry appointed by the then Legislative Council in 1881 to inquire into the merits of a series of readers (called ‘A.L. Bright Readers’) that it produced. The Committee was later institutionalised into textbook committees in the 1930s. These committees had other responsibilities too. Selection of books that were “of sufficient

interest and value to justify their use in schools”, and the recommendation of books for various school examinations were some of the other functions that these committees performed (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

The ACEID authors state that the activities of the Textbook Committee had placed them in an invidious position, and as a consequence, a Commission of Inquiry was appointed to investigate their activities. Finally, with the introduction of Sinhala and Tamil as media of instruction, the movement surfaced itself in November 1955 as the Educational Publications Board. Though much was expected of the Board, it merely confined its activities to selecting books for school use. This Board survives today as the Educational Publication Advisory Board (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

With the entry of Sinhala and Tamil as media of instruction in the secondary schools and the increase in enrolments, positive steps had to be taken to procure books in the national languages for higher education. Out of this necessity, the Swabasha Textbook Production Unit was founded in 1955 as a wing of the official Languages Department. This unit addressed itself mainly to preparing glossaries of scientific and technical terms and to compiling and translating science and mathematics books (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

In the early 1960s, the Department of Education again addressed itself to the writing of books for primary and junior secondary schools. A unit was set up in the Department for this purpose which subsequently combined with the Swabasha Textbook Production Unit of the Official Languages Department. The result was the Educational Publications Department, which was established on 1 October 1966 (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

With the introduction of the new reforms in 1972, the writing of textbooks aligned itself to the new curriculum. This became the responsibility of the Curriculum Development Centre, with the Department of Publications acting as publisher. This is the present stage of textbook development in Sri Lanka, with the responsibility for the production now being shared by the Curriculum Development Centre and the Department of Educational Publications (Ariyadasa et al., 1977).

National Institute of Education

National Curriculum 1997

The national curriculum in Sri Lanka is currently developed by the National Institute of Education (NIE), which is a corporate body under the Ministry of Education. Syllabi and teacher guides (referred to as ‘curriculums’) are prepared by the NIE with assistance of field experts and distributed to schools. Teachers have the freedom to adopt the curriculum to the local environment to make teaching and learning more meaningful and interesting. The NIE has continuous dialogue with teacher groups to get feedback from schools. The NIE also trains in-service advisors, who in turn conduct training programs for teachers in provinces. There are also teacher centres in the provinces which train teachers to upgrade their skills (World Data on Education, 2011).

School curriculum in Sri Lanka has been central to various stages of its educational development. During this time, education has been influenced by political, religious, cultural and economic changes in Sri Lanka and abroad. This, in turn, has had a significant impact on its school curriculum (National Institute of Education [NIE], 1997).

The author explains that earlier changes to school curriculum structure in Sri Lanka had been implemented to a large extent, however with inadequate planning and haste. In some instances, educational policies and reforms were motivated by emotion, and often driven by a sense of national pride and political expediency (refer pages 65 to 74 in this chapter).

By contrast, Sri Lanka’s modern school curriculum reflects the strong need for education to be competitive in domestic and international employment markets. It also acknowledges the importance of English – which is now a compulsory subject and a medium of instruction in all Sri Lankan schools (NIE, 1997).

School Curriculum Since 1997

In 1997, the NIE prepared and presented the Sri Lankan school curriculum, which extends from Grades 1 to 12 and comprises four stages:

1. Primary – Grades 1 to 5;

2. Junior Secondary – Grades 6 to 9;
3. Senior Secondary – Grades 10 and 11, leading to the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level); and
4. University Entrance – Grades 12 and 13, leading to the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level).

(NIE, 1997)

The curriculum is student-centred and adopts class-based assessment, school-based management and continuous monitoring to identify competency levels. English is now incorporated into the curriculum from Grade 1 to higher grades in a new approach to strengthen its use (NIE, 1997).

Primary Education

The Primary Education curriculum consists of three stages:

1. Key Stage 1 (Grades 1 and 2);
2. Key Stage 2 (Grades 3 and 4); and
3. Key Stage 3 (Grade 5).

(NIE, 1997)

The three elements incorporated into learning at primary level are the teaching process, guided play activities and deskwork (NIE, 1997).

Primary Education curriculum is student-centred and integrates four subject areas of the first language (Sinhala or Tamil), mathematics, religion and environment-related activities. ‘Oral English’ is introduced at Grades 1 and 2 to develop basic skills in verbal communication. ‘Formal English’ is a system of continuous monitoring and supervision (NIE, 1997).

Research into the efficacy and efficiency of the curriculum was conducted by the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) in 1997. It found that whilst the curriculum’s learning-teaching process was enforced in many schools, in

most cases guided play activities, which were primarily student-centred, were replaced with teacher-centred activities such as use of blackboards and books. This was found to have stifled scope for students' creative dynamics (NIE, 1997).

In addition, the NEREC found that scarcity of resources, particularly in teaching materials, made it difficult to implement the curriculum. It also found that teachers had problems managing large classes and were spending too much time in administration which could have been better spent in teaching. This was further exacerbated by the fact that primary school teachers were often expected to teach Grades 1 and 2 simultaneously. There was also evidence that due to the shortage of trained teachers, students from Grade 6 were often asked to assist in teaching Grade 1 students. Research also found that some teachers did not understand the process and purpose of school-based assessment; as a result, wide discrepancies were created between their assessments of essential learning competencies and those of the NEREC researchers (NIE, 1997).

Two major concerns of the NEREC emerged from this research. The first was the wide disparity in infrastructure facilities, learning-teaching processes and student performance between 'Type 1 AB' schools, 'Type 2 AB' schools and smaller 'Type 3 AB' schools. These are primary schools graded in relation to their locality and socio-economic status, with Type 3 AB schools being more remote schools with students of lower socio-economic background. Such classifications merely highlighted the wide social inequalities that existed among schools and students. The second concern was the lack of effective monitoring and supervision at local level (NIE, 1997).

Junior Secondary Education

The Junior Secondary curriculum in Sri Lanka covers four years (Grades 6 to 9), with Grade 6 being the transitional year from primary to junior secondary education (NIE, 1997).

The present curriculum was introduced in 1999, commencing with Grades 6 and 9, and then followed by Grade 7 in 2000, and Grade 8 in 2001. Changes to the curriculum included:

1. New subject names which replaced existing ones to align learning with modern concepts: for example, ‘Environmental Studies’ replaced General Science and Social Studies at Grade 6. At the same time, Science in Grades 7 to 9 was changed to ‘Science and Technology’, with the objective of making it more relevant at a time of technological advances in science.
2. A new subject, ‘Life Competencies’, was introduced with emphasis on practical work, activity-based projects and student-centred learning-teaching experiences. Students were provided an activity room to have ‘hands-on’ experience in handling simple tools and processes. This subject was abandoned because of lack of resources needed to operate activity rooms and the subject was renamed ‘Practical and Technical Skills’.
3. Curriculum that encouraged study of a second national language of either Sinhala or Tamil, which had not been included in previous years.

(NIE, 1997)

The study of English was further reinforced at Junior Secondary level, and student competency was assessed in Grade 9 (at the end of Junior Secondary level) in a school-based examination (NIE, 1997).

The curriculum also focused on counselling and vocational guidance, which were introduced at Grade 9. Further assistance was also given to students by the establishment of a link with vocational training (NIE, 1997).

‘Environmental Studies’ was essentially a student-centred subject, but lacked clarity and direction regarding objectives. As a result, it failed to effectively integrate science with social study subjects. It also failed because there were no competent teachers to teach environmental studies as an integrated subject – so much so that science teachers and teachers of other subjects mostly taught their own units as stand-alone subjects (NIE, 1997).

Another concern was that ‘Social Studies and History’ (Grades 7 to 9) had been conceived and taught as an integrated subject for thirty years, but because of the superficial nature of its content, particular components such as history were neglected. This concern was highlighted during a public consultation which revealed that teachers

tended to concentrate on their own specialties, causing history to become marginalised in the secondary school curriculum. There was, therefore, a strong demand for its restoration as a separate subject, as is common practice in most countries. Teachers also held the view that content of science and social studies-based components of the curriculum had been diluted in the process of integration. They indicated there was little advancement of these subjects from the Grade 5 curriculum, and in some instances there was a duplication of content in Grades 6 and 7 (NIE, 1997).

‘Science and Technology’ was criticised by both curriculum developers and teachers because they felt that the two components had been hastily and artificially integrated. Furthermore, teachers were not able to recognise the significance of including technology with science into the curriculum (NIE, 1997).

‘Practical and Technical Skills’ was also included in the curriculum, and was generally well accepted, especially as it provided students with hands-on experience in different areas of study. This in turn created the potential for aptitude and skills testing, which could then be directed and developed to assist students seek employment. The subject targeted four main areas, which included:

1. Food and agriculture;
2. Information systems, organisational studies and commerce;
3. Visual arts and crafts, graphic arts and merchandising; and
4. Music and performing arts.

(NIE, 1997)

The success of ‘Practical Science and Technical Skills’ was undermined by the severe shortage in most schools of activity rooms, space, funds, and resources such as equipment, tools and computers – which were central to learning and teaching. Teachers also encountered problems because the unit’s content and objectives were not clearly specified. In addition, most teachers lacked the knowledge and experience to direct students to study-related activities. Furthermore, subject advisors employed for the task were not adequately equipped to assist teachers (NIE, 1997).

‘Life Competencies’ was a stand-alone subject, and therefore not integrated into the curriculum. It was seen by teachers and curriculum developers as being introduced without clear objectives, a definitive syllabus or curriculum material. They found its concepts and content too abstract, “loosely presented” and confusing. The main focus of the subject was on equipping adolescents to effectively handle issues relating to all types of change. However, to do so effectively, the content had to be integrated across all subjects so that the unit itself was not overly discrete or isolated. In this way the subject was not marginalised or compartmentalised (NIE, 1997).

Sri Lankan educationists were of the opinion that the inclusion of a second national language into the curriculum, namely Sinhala or Tamil, was long overdue – especially in the pluralistic society that is Sri Lanka. It received a positive response from teachers, students and the community at large – regardless of the fact that there was ongoing tension between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Earlier, the two major setbacks for inclusion of a second language into the curriculum were the lack of books prepared specifically for second language learners and the shortage of competent teachers (NIE, 1997).

Senior Secondary Education

Senior Secondary education in Sri Lanka comprises two stages. The first prepares students for the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level examination, and the second for the GCE Advanced Level examination – two public examinations that effectively determine the future prospects of students (NIE, 1997). Core compulsory subjects for Grades 10 to 11 (equivalent to Years 9 to 10 in Australia) and Grades 12 to 13 (Years 11 to 12 in Australia) are listed below. It is important to note that English is now a compulsory subject.

Grades 10–11 (GCE ‘O’ Level)

Grades 10 and 11 are identified as ‘GCE Ordinary Level Grades’, and in these two academic years, students are required to prepare for their first public examination (NIE, 1997).

There are eight core or compulsory subjects, namely:

1. First Language (Sinhala or Tamil);

2. Religion;
3. English;
4. Mathematics;
5. Science and Technology;
6. Social Studies;
7. History; and
8. Aesthetic Studies (including literature).

(NIE, 1997)

In addition, there are seven elective subjects, namely:

1. History;
2. Geography;
3. Health and Physical Education;
4. Development Studies;
5. Literature (Sinhala, Tamil or English);
6. A second national language (Sinhala or Tamil) or another language; and
7. Mathematics and Science.

(NIE, 1997)

These subjects were designed at two levels so that students could sit the General Certificate of Education at ‘Ordinary’ or at ‘Advanced’ levels (NIE, 1997).

To support teaching and learning processes for students in senior secondary grades, the Department of Education planned to provide resources, which included laboratories, libraries and resource rooms. In addition, services such as counselling and career

guidance were made available to students. Further assistance was also offered through linkages established with vocational and technical institutes (NIE, 1997).

There have been no significant changes to senior secondary education in Sri Lanka since 1997, with even less progress being made to streamline the system. This is partly because of the logistical complexity required and the vast student numbers involved. Among more prominent concerns articulated at public consultations regarding the curriculum was that of the change from 'Science' to 'Science and Technology'. It was feared that the science syllabus in some areas had been compromised to make space for technology, thereby widening the gap between Ordinary and Advanced Level science courses. This concern was further exacerbated because the majority of science teachers who taught the GCE 'O' Level were the product of the National Colleges of Education, and as such had only attained the GCE 'A' Level qualification. These teachers were, therefore, not educated enough to teach complex subjects such as physics and chemistry, which required university degrees (NIE, 1997).

Grades 12–13 (GCE 'A' Level)

Grades 12 to 13 were structured for university entry through the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) public examination (NIE, 1997).

Five subjects were offered at the examination which included:

1. Biology (including Botany and Zoology);
2. Pure and Applied Mathematics;
3. General English as a compulsory subject;
4. Practical assessments in agriculture and science subjects; projects and assignments in other subjects which were made compulsory to the course; and
5. A technology stream which was proposed and geared to agriculture, industry and information sciences.

(NIE, 1997)

There was also a General Intelligence Paper designed for those seeking university admission which tested awareness, problem-solving, reasoning and comprehension (NIE, 1997).

Practical assessments in science subjects, and projects and assignments in other subjects were compulsory components of the GCE 'A' Level course, and subject to continuous school-based assessment supervised by Zonal Monitoring Panels controlled by the Ministry of Education (NIE, 1997).

Compulsory attendance of eighty per cent was required to qualify students to sit the GCE 'A' Level, which was also supervised by Zonal Monitoring Panels. The policy was welcomed by parents and teachers, but students felt extra time was needed for private tuition if schools failed to complete the syllabus on time (NIE, 1997).

Important Aspects of the Curriculum

Strengthening the English Program

A Review of Education Reforms (1997–2003) in Sri Lanka acknowledged that the curriculum recognised the importance of promoting English in the school system, with the view to increasing global communication and exposure to new technology. It was also seen as the means to satisfy demands of an expanding private sector for employees proficient in English and to reduce the level of unemployed youth (Ministry of Education [MOE], 1997).

The review stated that in order to reach this goal, syllabi and curriculum materials used in Grades 3 to 10 were improved by introducing 'Activity Based Oral English' in Grades 1 and 2, and thereafter providing equal access to communication skills through all grades. Students in Grade 12 and 13 received a general English course for higher education and future employment (MOE, 1997).

An evaluation commissioned by the National Education Commission in 2003 stated that the concept of the Activity-Based Oral English program was enthusiastically received by parents and students, and particularly by parents in rural areas whose children had no access to English (National Education Commission [NEC], 2003). There were, however, problems in implementing this program. These were evidenced in an evaluation commissioned by the National Education Commission (Fernando, cited in

Sri Lankan Association for Advancement of Education [SLAAED], 2003) and a monitoring exercise by the Sri Lankan Association for the Advancement of Education, which revealed many constraints which adversely affected the Oral English program (SLAAED, 2003).

Amongst other reasons, there were four decades of neglect in the teaching of English, which in turn had resulted in an enormous shortage of proficient English teachers. The studies stated high demands were made on primary school teachers who lacked sufficient proficiency in English to teach the language. Some teachers merely provided a list of words related to themes in environment-related activities in the Grade 1 syllabus, or lists of English phrases in Grade 2. Teacher in-service training programs were not commensurate with demand for training, and offered limited opportunity for interactive learning for students to acquire fluency and confidence in use of English in classroom activities. In addition, teachers claimed they received little assistance from in-service advisors. Furthermore, there were glaring urban-rural and socio-economic disparities in language competence of children, availability of support in their homes or externally, and in dispatch of competent teachers (NEC, 2003; SLAAED, 2002).

School-Based Assessment

The Review of Educational Reforms (1997–2003) addressing School-Based Assessment states that the reforms were introduced in Sri Lanka to overcome the dominance of public and summative examinations in the learning-teaching process, and to promote more holistic personal development of students. The Review was also used to provide progressive feedback to students, teachers and parents on students' performance – so that positive acknowledgment or remedial action could be given where needed. The Review comprised an assessment in primary school, and in addition, a school-based 'Proficiency' examination in Grade 9. There was also a 'School-Based Assessment' (SBA) of science practical work, and project and assignment assessments. Student Record Books provided information on overall performance and development of students (NEC, 2003).

The Review stated that Essential Learning Competencies (ELC) had been developed in primary schools for all three Key Stage levels. A pilot project in School-Based Assessment had been implemented from 1994 to 1998 in Grades 6 to 9, with support from the Asian Development Bank, which also funded the Secondary Education

Development Project. During the same period, the National Institute of Business Evaluation unit identified 'Learning Events' in each subject and developed a range of exemplar assessment tools to assess competency levels. Processes were documented and distributed to schools in the pilot project. Panels were established to monitor learning processes at Junior School level, and certificates were issued at the end of Junior Secondary Education in Grade 9 (NEC, 2003).

The NEREC evaluation of School-Based Assessment, the NEC evaluation of Junior Secondary curriculum and the 2003 Mettananda Report agreed that the concept of School-Based Assessment was widely accepted as a progressive step in evaluation. They observed, however, that the concept was not fully understood, particularly the shift from reliance on summative assessment to formative assessment, and from a normative referenced testing approach to a criterion-referenced or ipsative-referenced (or self-referenced) approach. This was further complicated by the reorganisation of teaching, learning and evaluation as a total process (Gunawardhane, 2002; Gunawardene & Lekamge, 2003; & Mettananda, 2003; cited in NEREC, 2003).

Resultant problems that surfaced during implementation of School-Based Assessment have been identified in the above studies and during public consultations. The consensus was that the whole process was cumbersome. Assessment procedures were time-consuming and an extra burden on teachers because they encroached on teaching activities and left little time for remedial action. It was claimed that teachers even resorted to awarding marks without proper assessment, especially in larger classes (NIE, 1997).

Doubts were also expressed as to the reliability of School-Based Assessment regarding the partiality of teachers, and there were also concerns that submitted assignments were the work of parents or private tutors. The exemplar assessment tools and Essential Learning Competencies for Grade 9 tended to assess only cognitive development. Further, the lack of training programs, effective guidance and monitoring undermined confidence of teachers (NIE, 1997).

From 2001, School-Based Assessment in 'O' and 'A' Level grades benefited from lessons learned in the Grade 6 to 9 program; it also received consultancy support from the Asian Development Bank's Secondary Education Modernisation Project. A

simplified assessment scheme has been developed, comprising discrete modules using knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour, and which focuses on the five basic competencies advocated in the NEC's first report. A controversial issue has been the recording of school-based assessment of grades on the 'O' Level certificate from 2002, which was perceived to need further review because of lack of uniformity in teacher assessment standards (NIE, 1997).

In 2003, the School-Based Assessment program was extended to 'A' Level grades, with similar assessments proposed for science practical work and projects. As indicated by the NEC studies on senior secondary education (Wijetunge & Rupasingha 2003; Karunaratne, 2003; cited in NEC, 2003).

While School-Based Assessment in Sri Lanka has not been very successful in Grades 6 to 9, it is still somewhat premature to assess its progress in Grades 10 to 13. Nevertheless, it has been welcomed as a change long overdue. The program's success, however, could well be overshadowed by the need for more inclusive student assessment in the form of student progress record books (NIE, 1997).

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the evolution of the School Curriculum in Sri Lanka from the period of British rule, which provided a repetitious syllabus and teacher-centred textbooks, to the more student-focussed curriculum of the 1990s and onwards.

It addressed the shift of thinking from syllabus content that had no relevance to the needs of the nation, to an all-embracing curriculum that is central to national priorities and national culture.

This chapter also refers to the establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre and efforts in producing a new curriculum in 1997 for Grades 1 to 12.

The strengthening of the English program in Sri Lankan schools was also identified as an important aspect of the curriculum in order to create greater opportunities in the job market (particularly in elite commercial enterprises), while providing access to global knowledge in education and technology.

Finally, this chapter has explained the introduction of School-Based Assessment and has discussed the research undertaken in this area by the NEREC and others in an attempt to obtain clarity and direction in a topic that is new to curriculum development in Sri Lanka.

CHAPTER 5: LANGUAGE POLICY AND FREE EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

Introduction

The author believes that the presiding influence of over 150 years of British rule in Sri Lanka provided the new Republic with a strong foundation on which to form and shape its education system.

The author completed his secondary education in Sri Lanka. He has observed that during the British period and even after the country's independence in 1948, proficiency in English was clearly the path for Sri Lankans to advance in the employment market, whereas local languages offered limited success in this area. However, a large majority of Sri Lankans had no access to study in the English medium, and therefore did not benefit from the advantages it offered. This disadvantage was perceived as the catalyst for widening the gap between the rich and poor in Sri Lanka.

The author has observed in Sri Lanka that children of wealthy parents were sent to fee-levying private schools or elite government schools (such as Royal College Colombo), where the medium of instruction was English. Children of poorer parents, on the other hand, usually attended provincial schools or rural schools where subjects were taught in the local languages. In addition, education for these students was limited to the lower grades and subject content was limited to availability of local language textbooks in arithmetic, history and geography. Poverty prevented such students from obtaining a better education; a lack of a better education in turn denied them the opportunity for better employment, and as a result, they remained in the poverty cycle. This was the reason for the government's Free Education Bill of 1945 – to create a more equitable society by providing access to education for all Sri Lankans.

The author also observes that prior to 1945, students in provincial towns or rural areas were not educated in English, and as a consequence did not continue their studies beyond primary grades or aspire to study at university. The government acknowledged the inequity in education, and in an attempt to create equal opportunity in education for all, introduced reforms in the Legislative Assembly in 1945 to change the medium of

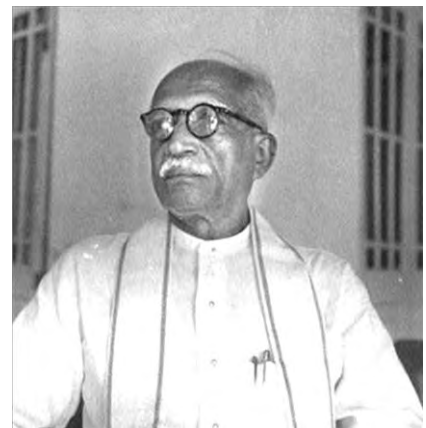
instruction from English to the local languages of Sinhala and Tamil. The change was introduced at primary school level and gradually progressed to higher levels and ultimately to university.

As previously mentioned, translating existing English textbooks in science and mathematics was a daunting task. Gaining any new knowledge was also limited, and could expand only as fast as English texts could be translated into the vernacular. He has seen that the local languages of Sinhala, and to a lesser extent, Tamil, were limited in their glossaries. Both languages are derived from Sanskrit and Pali. Therefore, coining a new word required reference back to the Sanskrit or Pali derivative, which was tedious and time consuming.

The author asserts that the major drawback of the legislation to change the medium of instruction was that translation was time consuming. More importantly, it impeded the timely integration of global knowledge in Sri Lanka.

Free Education

C.W.W. Kannangara was the first Minister of Education in Sri Lanka's Legislative Assembly. He was also a visionary who believed in equal rights to education, and introduced free education into Sri Lanka to provide a better life for Sri Lankans. In his words:



C.W.W. Kannangara (1884–1969)

(Courtesy <http://languagetrace.blogspot.com.au/2011/07/spokesman-of-zonal-education-office-of.html>)

It was the boast of the great Augustus [Caesar] that he found Rome of brick and left it of marble. How much nobler will be the state of the State Council boast when we shall be able to say that we found education dear and left it cheap, that we found it in a sealed book and left it an open letter, that we found it the patrimony of the rich and left it the inheritance of the poor? (cited in Sumathipala, 1968, p. 288)

Sivanandidni Duraiswamy, in her address at the 1988 Kannangara Memorial Lecture mentioned the fact that Dr Kannangara proposed the Free Education Bill. Duraiswamy stated that there was much criticism and debate both in the Legislative Assembly and in the public arena. Despite this, the Bill was passed in 1945 (Duraiswamy, 1988, p. 281).

The Free Education Bill included many reforms in educational policy and practice – but most importantly, as Duraiswamy stated, the Bill would have a long-term impact in education and the future directions for Sri Lanka in the following ways:

- The establishment of non-fee levying central colleges in each electoral division of the country with a full range of facilities. This was an attempt to provide access to education for all Sri Lankans and a strategy to overcome the disparity reflected in the fact that students of prominent city colleges enjoyed better work opportunities and advancement in society than their less fortunate provincial counterparts;
- Making the two national languages, Sinhala and Tamil, the mediums of instruction in Sri Lanka to the exclusion of English. This hoped to reduce socio-economic inequalities – which at the time was perceived to be due to the prominence of English as the medium of instruction that was not accessible to all Sri Lankan students.
- Increasing participation in education at all levels for all Sri Lankans.
- Transitioning the medium of instruction in science subjects from English to the national languages to make such knowledge available to all.

(Duraiswamy, 1988, p. 281)

Duraiswamy believed that the general aim of education as envisaged by Kannangara was the preparation for life in its material and spiritual aspects. Kannangara recognised three particular aims:

1. Mental Development or Mental Discipline;
2. Culture, including character development; and
3. Efficiency, including career progress and being a good citizen.

(Duraiswamy, 1988, p. 282)

The author asserts that it is Kannangara's third aim, the development of efficiency, that is relevant to this portfolio. In this, Kannangara took into consideration both the social and individual aspects of education. Socially, it means training to be a good citizen who

is useful to himself and the society he lives in. Individual efficiency therefore bears directly on the career of the individual. As Kannangara perceives:

Such a system should enable the student to achieve the highest degree of physical, mental and moral development of which he is capable of, irrespective of his wealth or social status; such an education will enable the student as a result of his education, to use his abilities for the good of the nation. (Report of the Special Committee on Education, 1948, p.11)

Kannangara also aimed for freedom of the Sri Lankan people (as envisaged by Swami Vivekananda, Hindu mystic and educationist (1890–1910)), when he stated:

Let us start building a national system of education which aims at realizing the destiny of the nation. Are we going to have a nation in this country? Are we going to be slaves forever? Are we not going to have freedom? (cited in Duraiswamy, 1988, p. 282)

Kannangara was firmly of the view that the English education formerly given in Christian missionary schools in Sri Lanka gave a sense of material prosperity and official position to those educated in those institutions. This, he believes, created a particular class of persons, while another class was created by those educated in the mother tongue at vernacular schools which were purely elementary, and so offered students no prospects of holding any office in public or private sectors. This division was, according to Kannangara, “the strongest factor that prevented the early unification of the people and retarded the development of a democratic form of government” (Duraiswamy, 1988, p. 280).

Duraiswamy stated in her 1988 address that Dr. Kannangara had a vision of a free nation of peace and harmony in the country though it is yet to be realised. As Minister of Education, Dr. Kannangara had to deal with an educational system that retarded unification of the people. But he was able through a special commission appointed by the State Council of Ceylon to formulate a plan of action. The most relevant aspects of this plan for the purposes of this portfolio are:

- The system of State schools, denominational schools and State training colleges. Denominational training colleges should continue to exist side by side, but in the future, only the State could establish new schools;
- Estate schools should become primary State schools;

- Religious instruction appropriate to the religion of the child should be provided in all schools; and
- Compulsory education be enforced from the ages of five to sixteen.

(Duraismamy, 1988, p. 282)

It was also during this time that Kannangara pushed through his two revolutionary reforms:

1. The Charter of Free Education; and
2. Use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in all primary schools with English as a compulsory second language across all school levels.

(Duraismamy, 1988, p. 282)

As Kannangara stated: “A gigantic stride that was taken in the regeneration of our race, for improving education qualitatively as well as quantitatively” (Duraismamy, 1988, p. 282).

Duraismamy cited Dr Kannangara’s report to the State Council, where he says:

Few will disagree with the proposition that education in a democratic society should be free at all stages. Talents and ability are not confined to any social class or group and any social system must provide for their emergence by the provision of equal educational opportunities. (Duraismamy, 1988, p. 282)

Kannangara admitted again the initial difficulties that he had in moving for free education in Sri Lanka:

In spite of the fiercest and most dogged opposition from a large and very influential section of the people of my land, in spite of abuse and calumny, vilification and ridicule, I have succeeded in obtaining the sanction of the State Council of Ceylon for a scheme of free education, providing for all children of the land equal opportunities to climb to the highest rung of the educational ladder from the kindergarten to the university irrespective of the status of financial capacity of their parents and for obtaining for our national languages, their rightful place in that scheme, as an essential pre-requisite for building up a free, united and independent nation. (Duraismamy, 1988, p. 283)

It is perhaps no coincidence that it was Sir Waitialingam Duraismamy, Speaker of the State Council of Ceylon, who played a decisive role at a crucial juncture in the passage

of Kannangara's Education Bill into law. There were forces even at the penultimate stage, as Kannangara himself said, "to torpedo the Bill in the legislature" (Duraismwamy, 1988, p. 282). Sir Waitialingam judiciously removed the "obstacles", and Kannangara referred to the Speaker's contribution, saying: "Sir Waitialingam was my friend who always stood by me and he was one of the persons who helped me to push through my free education proposals" (p. 282).

According to Sister Nivedita, an American disciple of Swami Vivekananda, students who have had a good education should use it not merely for themselves but for the good of others, their country and their religion. A healthy education must make them realise that no man lives for himself alone – and this fact must create in students a desire to help, serve and improve conditions for fellow human beings. Sister Nivedita spoke of a truly national system of education only when it is inspired with love for the country, "Let love for the country and countrymen, for people and soil, be the mould into which our lives flow hot," were her thoughts. To explain what a 'national system of education' is, Kannangara believes, "A successful national system of education must arise out of and be adapted to the ethos of the nation concerned" (Nirvedananda, cited in Duraismwamy, 1988, p. 283).

U. Thant, a former Secretary General of the United Nations General Assembly, stated in his 'Portfolio for Peace' address (cited in Duraismwamy, 1988, p. 284) that education should be linked to the realities of life, and it is such an education that holds the key to a large number of the world's problems. In his view, the educational system must contain:

- A vocational aspect focussed upon practical job training;
- A social aspect, related to the way one lives in society and grows up to be a good citizen both nationally and internationally; and
- A moral aspect, dealing with a scale of values both moral and spiritual. Human values like tolerance, patience, humility, and the philosophy of 'live and let live' must be developed to catch up with technical and scientific advances.

In U. Thant's own words:

... We need to revive on a broad scale some of the common feeling aroused by great religious movements in the past – love, brotherhood, patience, tolerance and above all the desire to live in peace irrespective of differing political ideologies. The deepest and the most sacred instinct must be evoked. ... the instincts that primary task of education in a rapidly changing world. (cited in Duraiswamy, 1988, p. 285)

Duraiswamy continued to emphasise in her 1988 address that education did not merely mean the acquisition of knowledge – academic or vocational. A student is trained not only to secure employment after passing exams but is taught to live a full life as an individual and as a citizen. He has to become a social being: and in this, both the school and home jointly play an important role. As an educated adult he should be able to fit himself into a nation, become one with his fellow beings and undertake the social obligation of a citizen (Duraiswamy, 1988, p. 283).

The author, in discussing the history of education in Sri Lanka at Chapter 1, has stated that the education system underwent various changes in the hands of Portuguese who invaded the country in 1505, and then by the Dutch in 1656, and finally the British in 1796. One could safely say that school education in Sri Lanka only began to take firmer form and shape at the hands of the British after they captured the island in 1815. During the British period, vernacular schools continued to function, but more attention and grants were given to schools teaching in the English medium.

Punchi (2001) states that the colonial education system under the British promoted social inequality. He adds that English-medium schools were essentially geared to produce white collar workers for numerous administrative positions in the British colonialism system. All colonial and post-colonial government employment opportunities and scope for higher education catered only to students from fee-levying schools (Punchi, 2001, pp. 366–67). It could be argued that this opportunity was available only to those who could pay such fees, which in this case, were the middle and upper classes. Further, only those educated in English received the opportunity to advance in Sri Lanka and overseas. English, as the language of colonial masters, was the path to upward social mobility, providing “access to a range of occupations more lucrative and more prestigious” in the colonial administration (p. 367). Those educated in the vernacular were confined to less aspiring jobs such as “a vernacular school teacher, notary or ayurvedic (non-Western medicine) physician” (p. 367). The pattern of

social inequality that developed in Sri Lanka during colonial times and even into the 1970s therefore becomes clear.

This fact is further borne out by K.N.O. Dharmadasa in his article, 'The Growth of Sinhala Nationalism in Sri Lanka' (1992), where he writes about the stratum of society privileged enough to receive an English education. By 1911, only 1.8 per cent of the native population was considered literate in English. In terms of community, it amounted to 4.9 per cent of Tamils, 3.5 per cent of low-country Sinhalese, and 0.7 per cent of Kandyan Sinhalese. It was this sector of the native population which had, in contrast to its less fortunate compatriots, access to "national elite" status (cited in Punchi, 2001, p. 367).

Medium of Instruction

In the 1988 Kannangara Memorial Lecture, S. Duraiswamy began by explaining that the benefits of changing the medium of instruction in Sri Lanka to local languages actually derived from ancient teachings by Hindu 'Rishi' educationalists, who realised that the very function of education is mainly psychological. They advocated development of inborn faculties simply through a loving and sympathetic approach. Their approach to education was that a student should be led very gently from the known to the unknown, from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from the concrete to the abstract. Western educationalists too realised the fallacy of ignoring the student's mind as a subjective factor in education, and stressed that the psychology of infancy, adolescence and youth also played important roles. Each stage in education should consist of helping to develop the inner faculties through the known and familiar (Duraiswamy, 1988, p. 283).

Pedagogy, Duraiswamy explains, is clear on the point that the student's faculties have to be made to unfold through the path of least resistance. Each step should be a natural one, easy and interesting; at no stage should the student be bored – and if this happens, the natural growth of the faculties will be affected. One's own vernacular is palpably the best medium of instruction. Duraiswamy mentions that Kannangara himself employed the philosophy of ancient Rishi scholars in his report, where he stated clearly that one's mother-tongue is the natural medium of education. He believed that the genius of a nation finds full expression only through its own language and literature. His reports recommended that the medium of instruction in Sri Lankan primary schools be in the

mother-tongue – and that thereafter, post-primary classes follow suit from year to year to university level (Duraismamy, 1988, pp. 283–85).

The use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in Sri Lanka was a revolutionary change of the highest educational value, breaking down social barriers that may have existed between the English educated and vernacular educated groups. English is important today because it is the *lingua franca* for a greater part of the world. English had been introduced into Sri Lanka by the British. It had for many years been the principal medium of instruction for all forms of higher education and for a small privileged group of people holding influential positions. This led to the establishment of ‘special’ schools where English was the medium of instruction, and where students attending these schools could afford the luxury of paying fees. English, to such students, became the normal medium of expression, but this also meant they were not fluent in Sinhala or Tamil. Kannangara believed this was a sad state of affairs, because students neglected their own language and consequently their own culture! English became the badge of social superiority, and ensured students had all the opportunities to progress. Kannangara spoke of the absence of equality of opportunity in these words:

The development of our educational system has resulted in two types of schools – one attended by those who could pay fees (a very small percentage) and the other who couldn’t (over 90%). The English educated class were the lucky ones who were given posts of administration under the government while the rest who studied in their respective mother tongues were the under privileged who, “continued be the fit subjects for the exercise of the power vested in the English educated administrative class.” (Duraismamy, 1988, pp. 283–85)

The language policy of introducing Sinhala and Tamil as the mediums of instruction increased access to education in Sri Lanka. However, this policy inadvertently created two separate streams of education based on language and ethnicity with hardly any integration. This has led to a segregated system of education in Sri Lanka, with classrooms, teachers, textbooks and teaching materials divided across language and ethnic lines. Duraismamy believes that English is really an alien language to Sri Lankans, and should not be referred to as a ‘link language’. Instead, the learning of one of the two national languages should be compulsory so that to a Sinhala student, Tamil becomes his or her second language and vice-versa. Duraismamy opines that education is related to our surroundings, and that learning each other’s language is not really alien after all. She asserts that learning the compulsory additional language will bring the

Sinhalese and Tamil communities together more effectively, and that greater understanding could be had, with goodwill, amity and harmony to follow (Duraismwamy, 1988, pp. 283–85).

In his education reforms of the 1940s and 1950s, Kannangara spoke of the fundamental need to bring heterogeneous elements of the Sri Lankan population into one nation.

According to him:

The existence of peoples of different racial origins, religions and languages is not peculiar to Ceylon and history shows that it is by no means impossible to develop a national consciousness even among a population so diverse as ours. There is indeed a large common element in our cultures already and under the stimulation of educational development, the notion of a national unity has been growing among us. In planning the future of education in Ceylon, we should strive to increase the common element and foster the idea of nationhood. (cited in Duraismwamy, 1988, pp. 283–85)

Kannangara also comments that diversity should be a source of strength and not a source of weakness. Each community has its own contributions to make to the nation, but this could be done only if there is equality of opportunities. He believed it was up to the community to iron out the inequalities so that every individual would give his or her best to the nation. Today, his words are more prophetic and relevant than ever. As a result, Duraismwamy believes that the education syllabus in Sri Lanka should be inspired with the same toleration and desire for peace among men (Duraismwamy, 1988, pp. 283–85).

Growing up in the former Ceylon, the author has had the knowledge and understanding that the British Empire at the time encompassed many nations by its sheer expanse. As he recalls, in 1946, King George VI was King and Emperor of a long list of countries and islands in the Commonwealth, which had all the characteristics of a global economy. English was accepted as the common language of this global network. The author believes it is regrettable that the British may not have been fully aware that English was in fact the major unifying factor in this Empire. Even if they accepted its importance as lynchpin of the Empire, they were still not prepared and did not possess the foresight to allow the majority of Sri Lankans the benefits of learning it. In their narrow and arguably selfish outlook, and with total disregard for the greater good, their sole concern centered in providing sufficient English education to the few who would ultimately support administration of their colony.

The author re-emphasises the total indifference of the British to the needs of Sri Lankans by depriving the majority of the right to learn English – thus weakening their future prospects and condemning them to a life of ignorance and poverty. In addition, the British totally neglected to promote the local languages in Sri Lanka, and moreover further stifled growth of these languages. This ultimately contributed to fuelling strong nationalist aggression in the country after independence against the English language – which in turn deprived Sri Lankans from enjoying prosperity as participants in the global market. The author argues that clearly, the British could have remedied this situation by making English available to all Sri Lankans to avoid problems of social discrepancy.

Interestingly, the French, Spanish and Portuguese made their languages compulsory in all their colonies, and these languages are still mediums of instruction and administration in countries such as Western Africa, Argentina and Brazil. While in certain situations, native languages may not always be official State languages, they are still spoken freely by some nations: for example, the French language in Mauritius.

In visits to Sri Lanka in recent years, the author has met Sri Lankan politicians and educationists who continue to blame the British for the current educational problems in Sri Lanka, tactfully distancing themselves from having contributed to this by introducing arguably shortsighted reforms after independence from Britain in 1947.

As previously noted, former Education Minister Kannangara introduced the Free Education Bill in 1945. He viewed colonial English-medium education as a factor that widened the gap between rich and poor. He saw the disparity between the few English-medium schools and the majority of vernacular schools, which led to class distinctions between the English-educated and those taught in native languages. As Punchi states (2001, p. 367), it was this class bias in education that prompted Kannangara to propose the Bill in Sri Lanka. This was hailed as a milestone in educational reform at the time, but it could be argued that whilst the Minister had great foresight as an educationist and social reformer, he was blinded by the spirit of nationalism. He did not consider the expanding global economy in post-colonial times and the fact that Sri Lankans could not participate in it because they lacked competency in English. His vision for education in Sri Lanka was patriotic, but insular. His successors would further isolate Sri Lanka by

introducing vernacular languages as mediums of instruction in the 1960s, and taking English out of the curriculum (Punchi, 2001, pp. 367–68).

It has to be admitted that the 1945 reforms evidenced significant improvements to education in Sri Lanka. School enrolments more than doubled from twenty-five per cent in 1901 to seventy-two per cent in 1953, and further increased to 83.5 per cent in 1985 (Punchi, 2001, p. 368).

Swarna Jayaweera, in her 1989 lecture ‘Extension of Educational Opportunity – the Unfinished Task’, highlighted the impact of the 1945 reforms. Jayaweera stated that education participation rates in Sri Lanka increased dramatically over two decades, while urban rural and gender disparities declined rapidly in the same period, unlike other countries in South Asia. While over half the school population and nearly seventy-five per cent of girls had not attended school in the 1930s, by 1963, participation rates in the five to fourteen-year age group were 76.7 per cent for boys and 72.6 per cent for girls in the same age group. Change of the mediums of instruction to Sinhala and Tamil resulted in enrolment for grades 9 to 10 more than doubling from 69,233 in 1952 to 151,265 in 1957, and nearly doubling again to 294,253 in 1965. Cumulative benefits of free education and change of mediums of instruction in secondary schools and university arts faculties saw a triple increase in university enrolments from 4,039 in 1959 to 15,219 in 1964 (cited in Punchi, 2001, p. 370).

The dramatic increase in education participation at all levels clearly indicates that the foreign language of English was a learning barrier for students. It also accords with the researched fact that a child’s mother tongue is the most effective learning medium for the child (Jayaweera cited in Punchi, 2001, p. 370).

Prior to the 1945 reforms, mathematics and science had become the privilege of the English-speaking elite. Science education is crucial to a developing country like Sri Lanka and a major part of its national development. It also results in a well-informed society on issues of environment, technology and health, and improves quality of life. Mahinda Ranaweera, former Director of Education, presents a good argument as to how changing the medium of instruction from English to vernacular languages in Sri Lanka has led to great advantages for the majority of people in the country, especially when it came to the learning of science:

The transition from English to the national languages as the medium of instruction in science helped destroy the great barrier that existed between the privileged English educated classes; between the science educated elite and the non-science educated masses; between science itself and the people. It gave confidence to the common man that science is within his reach and to the teachers and pupils that a knowledge of English need not necessarily be a prerequisite for learning science. (Brock-Utne cited in Punchi, 2001)

The author argues that the problem rests in the lack of textbooks in the vernacular languages, the difficulties in obtaining translations from English and timely translations of new material from English to the vernacular. As a consequence, the science knowledge base in the vernacular languages of Sri Lanka will always be outdated.

Asoka Bandarage, in his 1998 article ‘College Degrees Bear Bitter Fruit in Sri Lanka’, mentions that a good number of liberal arts graduates educated in Sinhala and Tamil could only find employment in the public sector until 1977. However, as Bandarage also states, privatisation and economic liberalisation since 1977 have curtailed State enterprise, and therefore employment, in the State sector. The expanding private sector, especially foreign banks and other companies, prefers to hire English-speaking youths from wealthy urban classes (cited in Punchi, 2001, p. 372).

The author states that, in hindsight, it could be argued that politicians and educationists in Sri Lanka who supported the shift to vernacular languages were always aware they would be creating an insular society, and the repercussions such policies would have for the future. Nevertheless, it was considered politically expedient at that time. Ironically, it was the very same people who were known to send their own children overseas for education – in clear contradiction of their policies.

The author is aware that former Sri Lankan president, Mrs Kumaratunga (daughter of Prime Minister Bandaranaike (1956–1959)), was a student during the education reforms and that she was sent to the Sorbonne in France for tertiary education. This clearly defied the very ideology of equal education espoused by Sri Lankan politicians. It is possible that those responsible for introducing free education and vernacular languages were well aware that Sri Lanka would struggle in the long-term to integrate globally because of its low proficiency in English, and therefore tried to safeguard the country’s future by having their own children educated in English overseas.

The author suggests that equal education in Sri Lanka is not an impossible ideal. He proposes that it is not necessary for all Sri Lankans to gain competence in English at higher level, given the scarcity of resources. Rather, a moderate sector of the population could reach competency in English. This would ensure a better and fairer chance of success for Sri Lanka as a whole in the global economy.

Conclusion

Countries around the world now interact with each other in the exchange of knowledge-based information, and so remain competitive and productive. English is the preferred language for such communication and participation.

Lack of communication deprives a country of the ability to educate its people to be competitive and productive. Sri Lanka currently needs to improve its standards of competitiveness and productivity by communicating and participating in knowledge-based education. Education in Sri Lanka has been set back due to political unrest, economic downturn, ethnic warfare, and more recently, the 2004 tsunami. It has been argued that the main problem faced by Sri Lanka in not being able to engage in globalisation of education is the lack of competency in English. This has been seen to the result of post-British educational reform.

Educational reform in Sri Lanka has included free education for all, followed by the policy to abolish English as a medium of instruction and to introduce local languages of Sinhala and Tamil from primary to tertiary levels. English was also omitted in the 1960s as a compulsory second language. It has been explained that these policies were introduced to make education available to everyone and to restore national integrity in Sri Lanka after 400 years of foreign domination. In order to provide quality education in Sri Lanka similar to the private school system, large well-equipped central colleges were established in every electoral district. These reforms improved education standards for the majority of Sri Lankans, but subsequently the lack of competency in English isolated Sri Lanka from global knowledge and education.

There is, therefore, the urgent need to revise and improve the education system in Sri Lanka. An important element that needs attention is competency in English: a crucial

skill that will enable Sri Lanka to access global knowledge-based information for the future.

Providing quality education for the people of Sri Lanka remains a dilemma. A short-term compromise may be to allow a moderate sector from the central school system to benefit from gaining competency in English. Progress could then be made into global education to ease the country's immediate and pressing needs. However, delaying any advance until such time when the larger population can all be offered quality learning effectively means it will take much longer for Sri Lanka to join the world sphere in knowledge and education.

CHAPTER 6: REINTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH AFTER FIFTY YEARS

Introduction

In 1997, after fifty years, English was reintroduced as a medium of instruction in Sri Lanka up to the General Certificate Examination Advanced Level (GCE 'A' Level), which was the university entrance examination for science classes in the country. Since 1956, the medium of instruction had been in the local languages of Sinhala and Tamil (Ministry of Education [MOE], 1997).

There were several recommendations and legislative changes that were enacted to reintroduce English into the education system. The most effective was the 1997 General Education Reforms introduced by The Presidential Task Force. Successive legislation served to update the actions already in force (MOE, 1997).

The author suggests the magnitude of the task and the logistics of reintroducing English in Sri Lanka were daunting, particularly as it affected the entire primary and secondary school systems simultaneously throughout the country. The situation was made more complex because the country was in a state of civil war.

There was fierce opposition to the reintroduction of English from ardent nationalists who, in line with the 'conspiracy theory' espoused by Phillipson and others (cited in Karunakaran, 2011), believed that these changes were once again engineered by Anglo-American imperialism – which, in essence, was not different to British colonialism that was so despised in Sri Lanka.

The Presidential Task Force ignored the nationalists' objections as being counterproductive to national progress and rejected the conspiracy theory. Instead, they found legitimacy in the 'grassroots theory' – a view held by authors such as Fishman, Cooper and Conrad (cited in Karunakaran, 2011), who claimed that English was not an exclusive language. Furthermore, they asserted that the choice of English was not dictated by Anglo-American dominance, but that it was a multinational tool to be used by everyone accessing global knowledge (cited in Karunakaran, 2011).

Every effort was made to facilitate the reintroduction of English in the school system, but students had limited opportunity for conversing outside the school environment because the community had forgotten the language after the lapse of fifty years.

Strategies to enlist and retain teachers competent to teach English, and to provide them additional training and incentives, were a continuous challenge because:

- incentives to teach were not motivational, and the capacity to increase teacher numbers was not affordable;
- low teacher salaries and lack of adequate incentives hindered deployment to war-torn areas of the country; and
- teacher absenteeism was high, which further hindered progress of implementation.

(Presidential Task Force, 1997, p. 32)

This was a significant issue that affected many schools in Sri Lanka, particularly during the crucial time of the reintroduction of English.

Background

Decline in the use of English as a medium of instruction in Sri Lanka commenced as a result of the Kannangara Report of 1943, which laid the foundation for a national system of education that transformed the medium of instruction from English to the local languages. The report also advocated English as a second language (Manoharan, 2002).

Transformation was at first gradual, but gathered momentum as further legislation was introduced to consolidate the national languages in administration, education and the law courts. With the enactment in 1956 of the '*Sinhala Only*' Act, followed by the nationalisation of schools and the adoption of national languages in universities in 1960, English lost importance in education in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, as it was relegated to the level of a second language, the opportunity and the ability to converse in English gradually diminished, except for a few professionals and a small cohort of the elite who chose to continue speaking English (Manoharan, 2002).

The author expresses the view that the intentions of politicians, legislators and educationists of that era to promote national languages in Sri Lanka were certainly driven by the prevailing nationalistic fervour and political expediency. However, in their enthusiasm, they failed to realise that by abandoning English in the education system, they were also sacrificing opportunities for advancement of Sri Lankans in the globalisation of knowledge. Sri Lankans had been deprived of English, the language of global communication, for fifty years.

To this day, Sri Lanka's proficiency in English remains poor. According to the UNESCO-IBE World Data on Education, English is and will continue to be the global business language. Thus, for Sri Lanka to participate effectively in the knowledge economy, it will need to recognise the importance of English as a determinant of future growth. Competency in English not only enjoys strong demand in the national labour market, but also opens up job prospects for Sri Lankans in the global economy (UNESCO-IBE, n.d.).

In Sri Lanka's fairly young, yet promising, Business Process Outsourcing Offshore (BPO) labour market, English is considered to be the most important skill requirement – but it is also one of the country's biggest shortfalls. A recent BPO industry survey revealed that although employment prospects are opening up in the BPO sector, supply of potential workers with good English speaking skills remains stagnant. English is currently taught as a second language up to GCE 'A' Level in all schools. As a result, only ten per cent of children achieve a targeted level of mastery in English language skills. English writing skills are virtually non-existent, with only one per cent of children exhibiting the required skills level. Additionally, these skills are largely restricted to urban areas where twenty-three per cent of children are able to master English, compared to only seven per cent of rural children (UNESCO-IBE, n.d.).

However, the reintroduction of English as a medium of instruction in education in Sri Lanka must be conceded as a positive and progressive change in its language policy. This is borne out in the statement made by Phillipson (1999):

At the heart of all education is language policy. English is at the heart of contemporary globalization processes, a dominant language ... It is quite possible that the forces behind globalization would prefer the world to be monolingual. To those who see the world in exclusive economic terms, the transnational corporations and banks, this might represent rationalization. In the academic world too there are those who assume that a single global lingua franca would be desirable state of affairs. (cited in Karunakaran, 2011)

The author observed that in recent years, English has also been reintroduced as a medium of instruction in other former British colonies such as India, Malaysia and Africa. Countries that abandoned English after independence and replaced it with their national languages have, in hindsight, realised its importance. As a consequence, they have introduced legislation and implemented strategies to reintroduce English into the curriculum to eventually make it a language of instruction.

Constitutional Changes in Language Policy (1943–2012)

During British rule in Sri Lanka, and particularly between 1830 and 1833, English was introduced as a medium of instruction in administration, education and the courts of law (cited in Karunakaran, 2011).

Between 1943 and 1944, a resolution was introduced in the Sri Lankan Legislative Council that one of the local languages, Sinhala, should replace English. This was followed by the '*Sinhala Only*' Act in 1956. The Act dictated explicitly that Sinhala become the official language of the country. This caused strong opposition from Tamils, who as a result, compelled Parliament to pass the *Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act* of 1958. The Act provided for use of Tamil in administrative service in the eastern and northern provinces where the population was predominantly Tamil. However, Sinhala would continue to operate as the official language in these provinces without prejudice. The 1978 Constitution reiterated that Sinhala was the only official language of the country with existing concessions given to the Tamils. Subsequently in 1988, the Constitution, through its sixteenth amendment, Articles 18 to 25, declared that Sinhala and Tamil become the languages of administration, with English declared the link language where necessary (National Integration Unit [NIU], 2006).

The current *Official Languages Commission Act 18* of 1991 in Sri Lanka provides that a person is entitled to be educated through the medium of either of the two national languages. However, this does not apply to an institution of higher education, where the

medium of instruction can be a language other than a national language. The inference was that the other language had to be English. Faculties in Science, Engineering and Medicine had realised the folly of using national languages as the medium of instruction and had reverted back to English; however, Arts and Humanities continued in the national languages. Therefore, to maintain status quo of the medium of instruction prevailing at the time and also maintain parity for both national languages, the provision allowed that where one national language was the medium of instruction in any course, department or faculty of any university directly or indirectly financed by the State, then the other national language could also have the same status. However, the provision did not make this obligatory (NIU, 2006).

Presidential Task Force, General Education Reform (1997)

The Presidential Task Force on Education in Sri Lanka ('Task Force') found that most students in Sri Lanka could not read, write or speak English at an acceptable level. As a result, they were not successful in finding suitable employment or enrolling for tertiary study. More importantly, they were unable to participate in the global pool of knowledge available through multimedia systems (Presidential Task Force, 1997, p. 21).

Furthermore, the task of improving competency in English came with the discovery that the only certification for English as a curriculum subject was the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level Exam (GCE 'O' Level), obtained after eleven years of schooling (equivalent to year 10 in the Australian education system). The Task Force found this level of competency inadequate to allow participation in the international arena of global knowledge in the twenty-first century (Presidential Task Force, 1997, p. 21).

The Government realised that the current predicament was caused by the legislation and actions of the past. It recognised that it had a responsibility not merely to legislate for administrative changes in the education system, but also to make a firm commitment to effective educational outcomes – which more importantly, was to achieve adequate competency in English.

To achieve this goal, the Task Force implemented many strategies aimed at improving competency in English at all levels. The author suggests that the process has been arduous, particularly since the usage of English in Sri Lanka had lapsed after fifty years.

In addition, English had been downgraded from a compulsory language and medium of instruction in the school curriculum to a non-compulsory second language.

There were other programs of reform that followed implementation of the Task Force of 1997. These focused more on administrative aspects of reintroducing English, whereas the Task Force was more instrumental in commencing the reintroduction and making it a viable operation regardless of obstacles and frustrations encountered in the process. The Ministry of Education produced a report in November 2011, *Progress and Recent Trends*, which confirmed the establishment of an English Centre and three Centres of Excellence for teaching English (MOE, 2011).

It is expected that the English Centres would increase the opportunities for both students and teachers to promote their competency in English via information technology.

The author acknowledges that any language which has not been used over a long period would be easily forgotten or deteriorate in quality. The further problem in Sri Lanka was the prevalence of strong nationalist, anti-colonial sentiments that fiercely upheld the exclusive use of national languages. Proponents of this view were not satisfied with merely abandoning English, but also despised it as the language of colonial suppression. Hatred was created towards the language and those who used it.

Those who held this view were opposed to the reintroduction of English, and saw it as an imperialistic intrusion. This view is known as the ‘conspiracy theory’, and is held by authors like Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1995) (cited in Karunakaran, 2011). They state that the global spread of English was linked to Anglo-American political and economic interests, particularly when English was imposed upon a country to replace its national languages with the aim of participating in global knowledge, “... the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstruction of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages” (cited in Karunakaran, 2011).

In light of this, Phillipson (cited in Karunakaran, 2011) explains that “linguicism” (language discrimination) occurs where extra funds and resources are allocated to teach English at the expense of other languages – even if there is a policy in place to use those languages. He goes on to elaborate the idea of legitimising linguicism, asserting this occurs in the two forums of “political discourse on language issues” and “in language

pedagogy”. He makes a powerful claim on language teaching, and more poignantly, on the teaching of English – which is the lynchpin in his discourse (cited in Karunakaran, 2011).

According to Karunakaran (2011), Phillipson explicitly says that an Anglo-centric approach with regard to English:

... talks about the forms and functions of English as the norm against which all language activity or use should be measured. At the same time, it devalues other languages either directly or indirectly and it has embodied a power that flushes out small and the weak languages. (cited in Karunakaran, 2011)

Phillipson argues that ‘professionalism’ is concerned mostly with the manner in which English is taught in the classroom, and has no concern for other social issues – except to subtly adopt English as a principal language (cited in Karunakaran, 2011).

It would appear that with the reintroduction of English in Sri Lanka, the Task Force was not influenced by foreboding concepts of the conspiracy theory. It always held the view that the choice of English was not a dictate of Anglo-American dominance – a view also held by authors like Fishman, Cooper and Conrad. According to them, many factors contribute to the spread of English, such as military, linguistic, economic, political, religious and sporting aspects (cited in Karunakaran, 2011).

In Africa, English was the means used to maintain multilingualism. The ‘grassroots theory’ states that it was normal in all countries for English to be used in the upper strata of society for commerce and technology. So the use of English in the world is not because of an Anglo-American conspiracy, but simply for the fact that people learn English to gain socio-economic benefits for themselves (Fishman, Conrad & Rubel-Lopez cited in Karunakaran, 2011). For the same reason, the author believes that English is learned in order to access global knowledge and the opportunities derived from it.

Fishman et al., advocates of the grassroots theory, hold the view that:

... English should be reconceptualised from being an imperialist tool to being a multinational tool. In this sense, English may well be the lingua franca of capitalist exploitation without being the vehicle of imperialism or even neo-imperialism per se. (Fishman, Conrad & Ruba-Lopez cited in Karunakaran, 2011)

Implementation of the English Program

During the reintroduction of English in Sri Lanka, opportunity to practise speaking it outside the school environment was limited, creating reluctance and lack of confidence among students. The main reason was that English was not the spoken language in homes or in the community. Currently, only the two national languages of Sri Lanka provide communication at all levels, with the symbols and idioms of these languages now deeply entrenched in the community psyche. This situation may not change in the short-term. As a consequence, it has created a tendency for Sri Lankans to conceptualise in their native languages while verbalising in English – which does at times become amusing and confusing, and hinders clear comprehension and expression in English.

The author cites an example where the tendency to translate directly from Sinhala can be confusing. A direct translation from Sinhala into English of ‘the elephant was tied to the tree’ becomes ‘the elephant was married to the tree’ – because the literal meaning of the Sinhala word for ‘tied’ is ‘married’ in the English language.

The principal aim of reintroducing English was to create the opportunity for Sri Lankans to communicate and participate in all areas of global knowledge, such as the arts, science and technology, and humanities. Therefore, to achieve this goal, the Task Force realised that it was important to adopt a holistic approach to the meaningful learning and teaching of English and not limit it to the use of glossaries or grammar teaching. The approach should be one that embraced the understanding of idioms, pronunciation, expression and cultural symbols. The Task Force also recognised that it would be ineffective and inadequate to approach learning and teaching English for the sole purpose of reading and interpreting text. As a result, they designed the reintroduction program to include an appreciation of English by using interesting and attractive texts and resource material (Presidential Task Force [PTF], 1997, p. 21).

It has been observed by the author that implementing English at lower school grades in Sri Lanka was much easier. At that level, instruction in English was simple, since students had not spent many years in the classroom and their nascent minds were more open to learning a new language. Furthermore, the impact of being taught in the vernacular was less intense in the early school years, and as a result, students were more conducive to learning a new language.

The situation was quite different for students in higher school grades, who had received schooling in the vernacular throughout their early years. By this time, students' thought processes and expressions were instilled and biased towards Sinhala or Tamil language and culture. As a consequence, this created a mindset that was resistant to learning a new language.

Students in higher grades were also made to study English at a pre-selected level appropriate to their school grade, even though they were not yet competent to do so. This delayed the learning process. In addition, senior students had no prior exposure to the language – which made it difficult, particularly as they were required to learn English at a faster pace without being gradually introduced to the language. Many students in the higher grades consequently suffered stress during the process of English implementation.

In spite of the availability of learning material, there was a lack of adequate help and empathy in complementing English instruction in schools, particularly in the higher grades. As a consequence, many students abandoned schooling altogether. However, the few who could afford private tuition or even overseas study were able to complete secondary education and enter university. Implementation of English proceeded in spite of these problems, and there were no alternative remedial strategies in place.

Implementation of English covered Grades 1 to 11. The program followed the protocol established in the General Education Reform of 1997 (PTF, 1997, pp. 21–22).

In Grades 1 and 2, English was used for communication in parallel with a vernacular language. This strategy helped young children to learn English descriptors for familiar nouns and verbs that they already knew in the vernacular. Formal teaching of English commenced at Grade 3 with use of textbooks, guidebooks and teaching aids, paving the way for future development up to Grade 5. From Grade 6, English was taught as an assessable subject in the curriculum. Students had access to textbooks that were revised and designed to make them attractive to read. A planned approach to develop an interest in reading, including the use of libraries and other resource material was also introduced at Grade 6. In addition, readers were employed in libraries to further develop the reading habit and increase confidence and fluency in oral and written English (PTF, 1997, p. 21). The program used from Grades 6 to 9 to develop skills in spoken

English was actually an extension of the ‘English for Communication’ program introduced at primary school level.

Implementation of English in Sri Lanka elevated it to the standard of a compulsory core subject at the GCE ‘O’ Level. As a consequence, greater emphasis was placed on learning and teaching it in Grades 10 and 11, because it was mandatory that all students obtain a pass mark of fifty per cent in English to qualify for the GCE ‘O’ Level Certificate. To assist them, appropriate textbooks, workbooks and supplementary materials were made available. These were also revised and upgraded to make them meaningful enough to capture students’ interests. Library facilities were improved, and resources revitalised to further enhance the learning and teaching of English (PTF, 1997, pp. 21–22).

A new subject, ‘General English’, was introduced in the curriculum as a compulsory, assessable subject at Advanced Level before entry to university. It was taught as a two-year course comprising 450 teaching periods. The main thrust was to provide students with quick and easy understanding and appreciation of the twenty-first century world as expressed in English. To accelerate this process, books were made available containing extracts of specially selected essays. They covered a wide range of current topics relevant to life and progress in a variety of pursuits (PTF, 1997, p. 22).

Search for English Teachers

Implicit to the reintroduction of English in the Sri Lankan school system was the availability of competent teachers to support and facilitate learning. The primary task was to assess the capability of teachers who were currently teaching English as a second language at GCE ‘O’ and ‘A’ Levels. As the level of English reintroduced in Sri Lanka was superior in quality and content to that being taught before, teachers had to be retrained through appropriate programs to enhance their proficiency as English teachers. The Task Force had pre-empted the shortage of English teachers, and as a result, resolved to engage retired teachers who were competent to teach it. The Ministry of Education, responsible for teacher employment, conducted the selection and placement program for retired teachers qualified to teach English. Those who were selected were required to follow a special course of training and reorientation (PTF, 1997, p. 22).

To maintain a steady level of support for teaching English, all teachers currently enrolled at training colleges and those enrolled in the future would be required to attain proficiency in English. This would be achieved through a two-year special English course, in addition to the special study area the teachers were enrolled in. Special programs for training English teachers at all levels were carried out on a 'pre-service' and 'in-service' basis (PTF, p. 22).

The Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka is currently faced with major problems in attracting and retaining capable teachers. It should be noted that these problems existed before implementation.

The Ministry of Education (2005) cites the following major difficulties in implementing English:

- Current incentives to teach are not motivational: Salaries of Sri Lankan teachers have been declining in real terms by about one per cent per year. In 2002, teachers earned only about eighty-five per cent of their 1978 salary in real terms. A PhD qualified senior lecturer or professional earns approximately \$US200 to \$US350 per month. Such low wages have made it difficult to attract and retain highly qualified academic personnel at Sri Lankan universities. The low level of teacher salaries has largely contributed to poor teacher motivation and has resulted in poor education outcomes at tertiary level. Teacher status, motivation and work attitudes have deteriorated over the past few years and the importance of motivating and improving the attitudes of teacher should be a national priority.
- Low teacher salaries and lack of incentives hinder deployment to remote and war-torn areas: Teachers generally avoid disadvantaged rural areas and prefer to stay in cities, towns and prosperous urban areas. This leads to overstaffing at urban schools and understaffing in rural areas with concomitant effect on learning outcomes in disadvantaged rural communities. This pattern is repeated at the tertiary level where it has also been difficult to attract qualified individuals to reside in subsidiary towns or semi-urban locations. In Colombo, Kelaniya, Sri Jayawardenapura, and Peradeniya, the ratio of academic staff with postgraduate qualifications (such as professors and senior lecturers) to academic staff without

postgraduate qualifications (such as lecturers) is 1.5:1. In universities located in subsidiary towns or semi-urban locations this ratio is 0.25:1.

- Absenteeism is a significant issue affecting many schools: Sri Lanka's teachers take seven million days of unentitled leave per year. Incidence of teacher absenteeism as a proportion of the school year varies from fifteen per cent in the north-western province to twenty per cent in the north-central and Uva provinces. These are absentee rates based on leave-days taken, and evidence suggests that leave regulations are not strictly enforced and that teacher absenteeism may actually be higher. Steps are being taken to combat the low level of education service delivery in rural areas. The Ministry of Education, with the assistance from the World Bank, has begun offering various incentives to teachers serving in schools in remote and war-torn areas through the Teacher Education and Teacher Deployment Project. This project aims to overcome some of the problems associated with teacher training and development.

The Ministry of Education has acknowledged the situation and searched for strategies in an attempt to resolve them. The magnitude of the task that has escalated over the years is insurmountable, particularly in a country affected by civil war for thirty-three years. Unfortunately, the defence budget has taken precedence over education, health and infrastructure spending. However, there is some consolation that with the end of civil war in 2008, the country is gradually returning to normal – and with it, hopes of stronger support for educational programs and sustainable progress in the reintroduction of English in Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

The reintroduction of English as a medium of instruction in Sri Lanka after fifty years came from the recognition that English was the lynchpin to participation in global knowledge. This led to commercial and technological advantage for the nation in the world economy.

The English language had not only been forgotten by many, but was also despised by Sri Lankan nationalists who associated it with former British colonialism. There was also a suspicion that the reintroduction of English to gain global advantage was a ploy

of Anglo-American imperialism, similar to British colonialism. This view was supported by conspiracy theorists.

Those who implemented the reintroduction held the view of grassroots theorists, who explained that English was a multinational tool employed solely to access global knowledge, and that it was not exclusively owned by Anglo-American imperialists. It is remarkable that a definitively British sport such as cricket continues to be played at an international level by Sri Lankans, who recognise it as a multinational sport which poses no threat whatsoever to the nationalistic spirit of the country!

The reintroduction of English programs has covered both primary and secondary schools, and was implemented simultaneously throughout the whole country. Appropriate teaching and learning materials were upgraded and made available for students and teachers.

There were, however, major problems in enrolling suitable teachers to facilitate the English program. Retired teachers were co-opted to supplement existing teacher numbers. Training and incentives were offered to enrol and retain teachers in a situation where teacher motivation and attitudes were low. Civil war in Sri Lanka and restrained budget spending on education tended to exacerbate the situation, but the reintroduction of English progressed steadily, and was strongly motivated by the urgency to gain competency in English for future success of the country.

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY

Making English the lynchpin for globalisation of education in Sri Lanka is a study that probes the continuous struggle throughout history faced by a large majority of Sri Lankans in their efforts to gain equal opportunity for a good education. They have realised that this would in turn enable them to seek better employment and a higher standard of living.

This portfolio addresses the events of the last fifty years that led to the abandoning of English in education in Sri Lanka – and that as a result, prevented Sri Lankans from participating in global knowledge and its economic benefits. The portfolio highlights challenges faced by the Sri Lankan Government and the Department of Education in their efforts to reintroduce English into the education system. It should be understood that civil war in Sri Lanka and the lack of funds has had a major impact on the program of reintroduction.

There was a paucity of new literature on the subject of this portfolio published in English, which could explain the fact that English had lost its importance in Sri Lankan education. However, the author visited Sri Lanka in 2006, 2009 and 2011, and met with academics at The National Institute of Education. They admitted that there was a lack of newly published material and directed him to the government printer and popular bookshops. There were a few old textbooks on education history in English. The other books on education were in the vernacular.

This portfolio provides a platform for future research on comparative studies of the development and progress of the English language in secondary education in Sri Lankan government schools in different provinces, and perhaps other Commonwealth countries. It could lead to related research between private schools and government schools. The outcome could lead to further research on teaching methods, teacher competencies and student participation.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 addressed the history of education in Sri Lanka during four distinct periods:

1. The Ancient Period;
2. The Portuguese Period;
3. The Dutch Period; and
4. The British Period.

Ancient Period (543 BC – 1500 AD): It is important to note that education during the Ancient Period was exclusive to the nobility and the monks. It was not intended for the rest of the population, who, as a consequence, was illiterate. Thus, it could be seen that there was no equality in education in Sri Lanka from the very beginning.

For those who were so privileged, curriculum included the Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit languages. Academic education also included art, painting, and literature. Those receiving technical education were taught subjects such as fabric-weaving, metalwork, gold and silver craft, clay pottery, tailoring, architecture, and irrigation construction; knowledge of the latter helped support the country's agrarian economy.

Although Buddhism dominated educational practices, Tamils also had access to education during the Ancient Period. It was based on Hindu traditions and taught by Brahmins. Despite religious differences, curriculum was similar to that of the Sinhalese.

Portuguese Period (1505–1658): The main aim of the Portuguese education system was proselytisation, which spurred development and standardisation of educational institutions to convert the local population to Catholicism. Education was used to win confidence and allegiance of the Sinhalese and Tamils, but it was only available to those who adopted the Catholic faith. This situation depicts the exclusive nature of the Portuguese system of education which denied education to the non-Catholic population.

Dutch Period (1658–1796): The aims of the Dutch were similar to those of the Portuguese. In this instance, it was the conversion of local people to the Dutch Reformed Church. Education was now controlled by colonial administrators and not by the clergy. The Dutch system of education displayed more sophistication and purpose

than the Portuguese structure, with inspectorial roles of accountability. It also had the advantage of building on an established foundation; however, it had to contend with many years of Portuguese influence on language, custom and religion.

The Dutch not only taught newly-converted people to read and write as a part of academic education, but their system of education also served to train local people to assist in government offices. Under the Dutch system, the schoolmaster only permitted children from marriages performed under rites of the Dutch Reformed Church to receive school education, and children had to be baptised into the Church itself. Under the Dutch, therefore, school admission was not based on academic merit or scholastic capability, but merely on legal, religious and moral criteria. Local people had to conform and convert to the Reformed Church to receive education and school admission for their children. In doing so, the Dutch provided education once again to an exclusive group and thereby denied equal access to education for the majority of Sri Lankans.

British Period (1796–1948): The British were in Sri Lanka for 152 years – almost as long as the Portuguese. Their purpose was systematically structured towards building the British Empire. The British had the advantage of building on both Portuguese and Dutch foundations. The importance of the British period was the introduction of English language into the school system. Conversion to Christianity was still the main purpose of education; however, this was not as harshly implemented as with previous colonial rulers.

The British established Anglican mission schools, where English was taught to more elite sectors of society, primarily to prepare them to work for the British government in local administration and commercial enterprises. Many Christian missionary societies of different Protestant denominations entered the education field, and used child education to convert the local population from traditional religions and Catholicism to a particular Christian denomination.

The British made education in Sri Lanka available to everyone, but in the process of doing so, created two schooling systems. The first was located in major cities, where English was used to teach primary to tertiary levels; the second was located in rural areas, where Sinhala or Tamil were used to teach primary to Grade 5 levels. Rural schools, often referred to as ‘village schools’, were considered inferior by those taught

in the English medium, thereby creating a class system in education. While access to education was available to all, access to quality education was denied to the rural population. Under the British system, two distinct levels of education had evolved that continue to be contentious educational issues in Sri Lanka today.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 addressed educational reforms in Sri Lanka, which are broadly categorised into two areas: British Colonial Reforms and Independence Reforms. These reforms were aimed, in the main, to improve the quality of education and provide better access to education for all.

The three Colonial Reforms – the Colebrook Commission (1832), the Morgan Committee (1865) and the Education Ordinance (1920) – were instigated from the colonial office in London and conducted by persons chosen or nominated by them. The aim was mainly to improve administration of education in the colony rather than create quality and equality for Sri Lankans. Providing opportunities for developing competency in English for a select few was not driven by altruistic motives but by the need to train suitable people to work in government and commercial enterprises. These reforms paid no attention towards developing local languages, arts and culture, which were neglected and suffered slow decay.

The Independence Reforms comprised:

- The Education Ordinances (1939–1947);
- *Special Provisions Act No. 5* (1960);
- Education Reform (1972);
- Education Reform (1977);
- Educational Reforms (1991), incorporating the National Education Commission Act; and
- General Education Reforms (1997).

The Independence Reforms were promulgated and legislated by the Sri Lankan parliament. The main aim was to establish an educational system that would provide quality education for everyone. This was achieved by introducing free education in

1946, followed by making local languages the medium of instruction in education the same year. In subsequent years, educational reforms designated English as a non-compulsory second language, thereby creating a decline in the use and competency of English. The *Special Provision Act* (1960) brought all schools under State control with the exception of a few denominational schools.

The Independence Reforms were to a great degree driven by political expediency and nationalistic fervor. There was limited research and consulting. The outcome of these drastic changes resulted in an inefficient education system and the lack of competency in English – the major factor which deprived Sri Lankans from participating in global knowledge. The Sri Lankan Government recognised this disadvantage and passed the 1991 and 1997 Reforms to reintroduce English into the curriculum.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 explained that the concept of globalisation of education is the participation in education that occurs through access to knowledge-based information – which provides young people with the tools they need to cope with the world around them and to embrace the change encountered in this. It included an appreciation of the complexity involved, the need for conflict management, the inevitability of change, and the interconnectedness amongst humans within their environment. Therefore, such learning empowers students to shape their future and helps them counter feelings of powerlessness. It is suggested that globalisation of education prepares globally competent citizens. Furthermore, that globalisation of education affects the society of the future.

Students must become globally literate and capable of competing internationally, particularly in the workforce of the future – for example, by using smarter work practices, learning new skills and applying better methods of technology.

Unfortunately, many developing nations lack access to such systems, and, as a result, are further disadvantaged educationally, socially and economically. Relating this situation to Sri Lanka, it was found that as a developing nation, Sri Lanka has until recent years experienced similar disadvantage. This fact was borne out during the tsunami relief operation there in 2005, when modern medical technology used by overseas relief teams could not be operated by local medical staff due to their

unfamiliarity with it. Events of this nature highlight the urgent need to identify the problems, and to search for strategies to enable efficient access to global knowledge.

In addition, use of local languages in Sri Lanka as the medium for most, if not all, communication, limits the population's access to global knowledge. This is because English is the universal language of global communication, and therefore essential to the globalisation of education itself. Thus, it can be seen that while English plays a pivotal role in the advancement of developing countries, it is still the second or foreign language in countries like Sri Lanka.

In searching for strategies to educate Sri Lankans about advances in modern technology, the Sri Lankan government has realised the need to enhance access to global knowledge. To do so, it also concedes that primarily, standard of English in the country needs to be improved. It has acknowledged that lack of competency in English has hindered the country from participating fully in global communication, and in turn, in global education. To address these needs, the government has reintroduced English into the education system.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 addressed the Sri Lankan school curriculum. The highlights of this chapter are the curriculum changes that began in 1956 and which continue to occur. This was seen as an important departure from the mechanistic disciplinary approach that characterised primary education. The grouping of subjects other than religion, 'mother tongue' (parental language most used at home) and 'number' (elementary arithmetic) in the primary curriculum came under physical and aesthetic activities, constructional activities and environmental activities.

Another curriculum change that occurred around the same time was the drafting and implementation of a coordinated general science syllabus for junior secondary school, and the running of in-service ('on-the-job' training) courses. These were also important landmarks in the history of curriculum development in Sri Lanka.

The chapter explained that the writing of textbooks constituted an important part of the curriculum process. The year 1979 stands out as the year in which the Sri Lankan Department of Education embarked on textbook production. It was the lack of books and, more importantly, the lack of good books in the swabasha (vernacular) schools and

in the swabasha stream of the Anglo-swabasha (mixed English and vernacular) schools, that made the Department enter the field of textbook production. Authors were drawn from a wide circle. Departmental directors, together with inspectors, translators and scholars from outside the Department, contributed their share to the success of the movement.

With the introduction of the new reforms in 1972, the writing of textbooks aligned itself to the new curriculum. This became the responsibility of the Curriculum Development Centre, with the Department of Publications acting as publisher.

The major challenge was the National Curriculum 1997, developed by the National Institute of Education (NIE), which is a corporate body under the Ministry of Education. Syllabi and teacher guides (referred to as ‘curriculums’) are prepared by the NIE with assistance of field experts and distributed to schools. Teachers have the freedom to adopt the curriculum to the local environment to make teaching and learning more meaningful and interesting. The NIE has continuous dialogue with teacher groups to get feedback from schools. The NIE also trains in-service advisors, who in turn conduct training programs for teachers in provinces. There are also teacher centres in the provinces which train teachers to upgrade their skills.

School curriculum in Sri Lanka has been central to various stages of its educational development. During this time, education has been influenced by political, religious, cultural and economic changes in Sri Lanka and abroad. This, in turn, has had a significant impact on its school curriculum.

Sri Lanka’s modern school curriculum reflects the strong need for education to be competitive in domestic and international employment markets. Importantly, English is now a compulsory subject and a medium of instruction in all Sri Lankan schools.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 explained language policy and free education in Sri Lanka. Most important was the Free Education Bill (1945), which included many reforms in educational policy and practice. It was the brainchild of the first Education Minister of the Sri Lankan Legislative Assembly, Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara. The Bill would have a long-term impact in education and the future direction for Sri Lanka in the following ways:

- Establishment of non-fee levying central colleges (State high schools) in each electoral division of the country with a full range of facilities – which was an attempt to provide access to education for all Sri Lankans, and a strategy to overcome disparity reflected in the fact that students of prominent city colleges enjoyed better work opportunities and advancement in society than their less fortunate provincial counterparts;
- Making the two national languages, Sinhala and Tamil, the mediums of instruction in Sri Lanka to the exclusion of English. This hoped to reduce socio-economic inequalities – which at the time was perceived to be due to the prominence of English as the medium of instruction, which was not accessible to all Sri Lankan students;
- Increasing participation in education at all levels for all Sri Lankans;
- Transitioning the medium of instruction in science subjects from English to the national languages to make such knowledge freely available.

Kannangara's feelings about quality education for all Sri Lankans is clear when he stated that education formerly given in Christian missionary schools gave a sense of material prosperity and official position to those educated in those institutions. This, he believed, created a particular class of persons, while another class was created by those educated in the mother tongue at vernacular schools which were purely elementary and so offered students no prospects of holding any office in public or private sectors. This division was, according to Kannangara, "the strongest factor that prevented the early unification of the people and retarded the development of a democratic form of government".

Kannangara had a vision of a free nation of peace and harmony in the country, though it is yet to be realised. As Minister of Education, he had to deal with an educational system that retarded unification of the people. But he was able through a special commission appointed by the State Council of Ceylon to formulate a plan of action. The most relevant aspects of this plan for the purposes of this portfolio were:

- The system of State schools, denominational schools and State training colleges. Denominational training colleges should continue to exist side by side, but in the future, only the State could establish new schools;
- State schools should become primary State schools;
- Religious instruction appropriate to the religion of the child should be provided in all schools; and
- Compulsory education be enforced from the ages of five to sixteen.

It was also during this time that Kannangara pushed through his two revolutionary reforms – the Charter of Free Education and use of the mother tongue as medium of instruction in all primary schools, with English as a compulsory second language across all school levels.

Situations changed in Sri Lanka in the years that followed. Driven by the fervour of nationalism and political expediency, English was relegated to a non-compulsory second language. As a result, it once again created a state of inequality in education and society because lack of competency in English prevented upward mobility in employment and a better lifestyle.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 addressed the reintroduction of English in Sri Lanka after fifty years. Important aspects were the legislation introduced, the concepts inherent in the acceptance or rejection of English as the lynchpin to participation of global knowledge, and the process and problems of its reintroduction.

Several recommendations and legislative changes were enacted to remove English from the Sri Lankan educational curriculum. Enactment of the *Free Education Act 1945* and changing the medium of instruction from English to the local languages in the same year began the downward spiral of English in education. The 1956 '*Sinhala Only*' Act, and the nationalisation of schools followed by adoption of national languages in universities in 1960, further exacerbated the decline of English in Sri Lanka. As English lost its importance, the opportunity and the ability to converse in English gradually diminished.

The Presidential Task Force on Education in Sri Lanka found that most students in Sri Lanka could not read, write or speak English at an acceptable level. As a result, they were not successful in finding suitable employment or enrolling for tertiary study. More importantly, they were unable to participate in the global pool of knowledge available through multimedia systems. As a consequence, the reintroduction of English into the education system was incorporated in the 1997 General Education Reform.

It is important to recognise that a major problem in Sri Lanka at the time was the prevalence of strong nationalist, anti-colonial sentiments that fiercely upheld the exclusive use of national languages. Proponents of this view were not satisfied with merely abandoning English, but also despised it as the language of colonial suppression. Hatred was created towards the language and those who used it.

Those who held the ‘conspiracy theory’ view were opposed to the reintroduction of English, and saw it as a repetition of imperialistic intrusion. It was believed that the global spread of English was linked to Anglo-American political and economic interests, particularly when English was imposed upon a country to replace its national languages with the aim of participating in global knowledge.

It would appear that with the reintroduction of English in Sri Lanka, the Presidential Task Force was not influenced by foreboding concepts of the conspiracy theory. It always held the view that the choice of English was not a dictate of Anglo-American dominance – the alternate ‘grassroots theory’ opinion. Proponents of this view believed many factors contributed to the spread of English, such as military, linguistic, economic, political, religious and sporting aspects. They maintained that English should be reconceptualised from being an imperialist tool to being a multinational tool.

The Task Force believed it was normal in all countries for English to be used in the upper strata of society for commerce and technology, so its use in the world is not because of an Anglo-American conspiracy, but simply for the fact that people learn English to gain socio-economic benefits for themselves. For the same reason, the author believes that English is learned to access global knowledge, and the opportunities derived from it.

Implementation of English in Sri Lanka was processed at different levels. In Grades 1 and 2, English was used for communication in parallel with a vernacular language. This

strategy helped young children to learn English descriptors for familiar nouns and verbs that they already knew in the vernacular. Formal teaching of English commenced at Grade 3 with use of textbooks, guidebooks and teaching aids, paving the way for future development up to Grade 5. From Grade 6, English was taught as an assessable subject in the curriculum. Students had access to textbooks that were revised and designed to make them attractive to read. A planned approach to develop an interest in reading, including use of libraries and other resource material, was also introduced at Grade 6. In addition, people were employed as readers in libraries to further develop the reading habit and increase confidence and fluency in oral and written English. The program used from Grades 6 to 9 to develop skills in spoken English was an extension of the 'English for Communication' program introduced at primary school level.

Implementation of English in Sri Lanka elevated it to the standard of a compulsory core subject at GCE 'O' Level. As a consequence, greater emphasis was placed on learning and teaching it in Grades 10 and 11, because it was mandatory that all students obtain a pass mark of fifty per cent in English to attain the GCE 'O' Certificate. To assist them, appropriate textbooks, workbooks and supplementary materials were made available. These were also revised and upgraded to make them meaningful enough to capture students' interests. Library facilities were improved, and resources revitalised to further enhance the learning and teaching of English.

A new subject, 'General English', was introduced in the curriculum as a compulsory, assessable subject at Advanced Level before entry to university. It was taught as a two-year course comprising 450 teaching periods. The main thrust was to provide students with quick and easy understanding and appreciation of the twenty-first century world as expressed in English. To accelerate this process, books were made available containing extracts of specially selected essays. They covered a wide range of current topics relevant to life and progress in a variety of pursuits.

Implicit to the reintroduction of English in the Sri Lankan school system was the availability of competent teachers to support and facilitate learning. The primary task was to assess capability of teachers who were currently teaching English as a second language at GCE 'O' and 'A' Levels. As the level of English reintroduced in Sri Lanka was superior in quality and content to that being taught before, teachers had to be retrained through appropriate programs to enhance their proficiency as English teachers.

The Presidential Task Force had pre-empted the shortage of English teachers, and as a result, resolved to engage retired teachers who were competent to teach it. The Ministry of Education, responsible for teacher employment, conducted the selection and placement program for retired teachers qualified to teach English. Those who were selected were required to follow a special course of training and reorientation.

To maintain a steady level of support for teaching English, all teachers currently enrolled at training colleges and those enrolled in the future would be required to attain proficiency in English. This would be achieved through a two-year special English course, in addition to the special study area the teachers were enrolled in. Special programs for training English teachers at all levels were carried out on a 'pre-service' and 'in-service' basis.

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